THE

ENTHUSIAST;

Altered from the German

of

C. SPINDLER.



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THE ENTHUSIAST.

CHAPTER I.

"Earth to earth! dust to dust!"

English Liturgy.

"THINK of the end!" exclaimed the margravine, with a serious voice, making the sign of the cross. The ladies sitting round her highness imitated her example, and waited until their honoured mistress resumed her needle, when they also continued their occupation; and the fair reader turned again her eyes from the margravine to her book, and proceeded with her relation as follows;

"When the body of his Most Christian Majesty had arrived at the burial-place of his ancestors, it was borne by five-and-twenty men of his Scottish body-guard into the vault. The king-at-arms threw his hat and coat-of-arms into the vault, and cried, with a loud voice, 'Heralds of the crown of France, do your duty!'

"After these men had done in like manner with the king-at-arms, the Orleans' herald descended

into the vault to arrange the insignia of honour on the royal coffin. They were brought in as follows: the banner of the Cent-Suisse; the colours of the three hundred archers of the guards; the ensign of the hundred Scottish body-guards. The master of the horse bore the spurs, gloves, shield, coat-of-arms, and helmet, of the deceased king. Next came the king's field banner, the royal sword, and the clarion of France. The Duke of Luynes carried the hand of justice; the Duke of Ventadour the royal sceptre; and the Duke of Uzès the royal crown. All were on black cushions of velvet, and were placed on the coffin, the sword and the oriflamme excepted; these were only lowered into the tomb with their points downwards. Sixteen officers of the household threw their staves, wrapped round with crape, into the vault. The Duke of Trémouille, who sustained the office of grand master of the royal household for the prince of Condé, lowered his staff of office in the same manner as had been done with the sword and the oriflamme, and cried aloud, 'The king is dead!' The king-at-arms then turned towards the people, and repeated three times, with a loud voice, 'The king is dead! pray to God for his soul.'

"After an interval of silence, the Duke of Trémouille exclaimed, 'Long live the king!' and immediately the king-at-arms repeated, three times, 'Long live King Louis the Fourteenth, king of France and Navarre!' The banners, the sword, and the staff of the master of the household, were again borne aloft, and all left the church rejoicing, to the sound of kettle-drums and trumpets."

"Enough!" said the margravine, with emotion;

"the melancholy spectacle concludes in the true style of that fickle people, and may well serve as a lesson to convince the present wearer of the crown that, with the same indifference, they will turn from *his* bed of death to salute the rising sun. Far more, than by the mournful ceremony over the tomb of a mighty prince, have I been moved by the name of his successor, whom I cannot think upon without trembling; although the grave has also long since engulfed him,—him, the devastator of my dearly beloved country, and the incendiary in the very heart of our territory."

"Your highness is thinking of an unhappy period," remarked the elderly Baroness Von Ehresheim,—the lady of the keys,—in a low tone: "I can remember it, as if it were yesterday. I was an eye-witness of those dreadful deeds in my capacity as maid of honour to the deceased margravine, who kept herself shut up in her castlé till the flames had nearly seized it. The city was on fire in all directions. The enemy proceeded in the work of conflagration until it reached, at length, the castle; although a most solemn pledge had been given that it should be spared. But not even the convents escaped their fury. We fled, as from Gomorrah!"

"And the hero was afar, who could deliver you," replied the margravine, with feelings of anguished recollection. "Held back by duty, he could only bewail your misery! The flames of your property were my bridal torch; and truly it was no paradise that awaited that hero and his bride! I was doomed, above all women of my rank, to lament to the last my unhappy fate, cheered by so few glimpses of sunshine, since I left

the paternal mansion, to lament a husband, permitted to endear existence to me, but for too short a time, and torn from me by fate at an early period of our union."

"Your highness has reared a son who is fully worthy to be the successor of his father," remarked the Baroness Von Ehresheim, rising up in token of respect, in which she was joined by all the ladies present.

"A good son is a blessing from Heaven," replied the margravine, modestly, — "a blessing, also, always follows the deeds of the righteous; on that account, it is, I hope and trust, that my son will be happy."

The ladies present then joined in praise of his mildness and generosity of disposition.

"This residence of his father's widow is a proof of the latter quality," averred the margravine, flattered by their praise of her son. "This mansion, so richly furnished, although concealed in the depths of the forest, has often excited the wonder of strangers, who term it a fairy castle; and I have often asked myself whether I deserve so much elegance and splendour."

"Your highness's humility is excessive," replied the Baroness Von Ehresheim, "and the chapel in the forest is a striking proof of it; — Heaven, we trust, will long preserve your highness to us."

The margravine expressed her gratitude, and dismissed the ladies, with the exception of the baroness, who was engaged in laying several accounts before her, and an abstract of the alms-box, remarking, at the same time, that her almoner and confessor was now lying seriously ill, and that

but small hopes were entertained of his recovery.

"The poor dean!" exclaimed the princess, with a sigh, "how deeply his loss would afflict me! How it grieves me not to be able to pay him the little attentions of a nurse! He could never be persuaded to give up his post in town and accompany me in my solitude. The care of the souls of the poor was dearer to him than the wishes of his friend. Who could repair the loss I should sustain by his death?"

"He remarked to me, in confidence," said the baroness, "that he had been occupied in providing for the spiritual wants of your highness, and would immediately take the liberty of pointing out his successor, although he by no means wished to determine your decision."

The margravine appeared absorbed in thought, and sank back in her chair; the baroness seized the opportunity to change the conversation.

"May I beg the favour of your highness to be allowed to introduce my niece, who arrived here yesterday evening, and to intreat your protection for her tender youth?"

"Do you mean fair Helen?" inquired the margravine, earnestly; — "bring her to me by all means; I am anxious to see the young lady, of whom your report has been so favourable."

"A good report should ever attend innocence," replied the flattered and delighted aunt; "more I cannot say of a young person scarcely advanced beyond childhood. The fate of her parents was very remarkable."

"I should like to hear the story from the lips

of the young lady herself," remarked the margravine, looking at her watch; "we have still an hour to dinner, and I will see her now."

The baroness expressed herself deeply grateful, and departed as speedily as was consistent with politeness. The margravine went to her dressing-table, threw a glance at the looking-glass, and added a little of art's carnation to her pale lips. As she stood looking at herself, a slight smile played about her mouth. She was flattered to perceive that her glass still reflected the traits of beauty, which the stern progress of time seemed to have spared for ten years of the forty-five that had passed over its possessor. Her matron-like and majestic figure,—her calm look, and fine hair, and the delicate whiteness of her neck, arms and hands, formed a still beautiful whole, which gained additional lustre from the simple and unadorned dress of the widow.

A delicious sensation of pleasure at some gentle suggestion of the fickle god, sat on the brow of the margravine, which, however, soon disappeared, as her eye fell on the portrait of a female of exquisite beauty, that was suspended over the dressing-table. With a sigh she turned from her glass, and threw herself into her chair with the half-uttered exclamation, "O, my sister! Magdalena, the penitent!"

She was about to burst into tears, but a stir at her door compelled her to suppress her struggling feelings and to assume the appearance of calm etiquette. With a majestic and composed air she arose, leaning with her right hand on the table, while her left held a handkerchief, and looked

towards the door, which, opened by the servant-in-waiting, admitted the Baroness Von Ehresheim, leading with her a beautiful and youthful figure.

Fashion, in vain sought to hide this lovely being beneath a load of cumbrous ornaments; the native grace of her person shone forth beneath them all. Helen's golden tresses, as was the fashion at the little court of the margravine, fell in unadorned ringlets down her neck and shoulders, and her pure blue eyes looked smilingly around, without losing any of their charm from the contrast afforded by the ruddy glow of her lips. Her delicate hands seemed embarrassed with a fan; and in her bosom, which was veiled more closely than fashion would commend, were stuck two twin roses, and a sprig of balsamic jasmine, far surpassing in beauty all the artificial elegance of her dress. Modestly, and with many obeisances, the bewitching figure approached her exalted patroness, as if she had been afraid to touch, with the pressure of her shoes, the mosaic work of the room.

The margravine well knew how to re-assure diffidence, and the encouraging salutation which she bestowed on Helen, as she sat down, revived the young lady, as much as if she had had the honour of being invited to sit down herself. The latter, at length, in the form which etiquette imposed upon an infirm person, remarked that her aunt had led her to hope that she might be taken into the service of her highness, and that she accordingly made bold to join her feeble entreaty, to that powerful advocacey. The margravine could not help smiling at the charming simplicity which

spoke so forcibly in the language and demeanour of the young lady; and inquired her name and family, for the purpose of carrying on the conversation.

"My name," she replied, after some hesitation, and with a deep sigh; "is Helen am Steig, and my father was descended from an ancient family, of Swiss origin, that left their native country, and settled in the district over which your highness's son now rules. My father, however, inherited from his ancestors but a mayoralty in a wild mountainous country, called, on what account I cannot tell, God's-valley and Men's-meadow, and on this patrimony he breathed his last."

"And your mother?" inquired the margravine.

"She died before my father, and he therefore followed her."

"*Therefore?*"

"Life to him was valueless, without my mother; for they were, indeed, inexpressibly attached to each other, and love is indissoluble."

"Young woman!" said the margravine, suddenly interrupting her, as if startled by her remark. Helen looked calmly on, although a slight blush somewhat tinged her cheek.

The baroness, on the contrary, stood as if on thorns, and at length put an end to the embarrassment, by remarking, with some warmth to her niece; "Her highness's inquiry does not relate to such matters; she merely wishes to know how your father became acquainted with your mother."

Helen smiled, and looked confused, but deriving fresh confidence from the eyes of the margravine, proceeded as follows:

"My father lived for a long time alone, at Kahlanstein,—such was the name of his mayoralty; for his parents had died early, and he had been left to cultivate, without assistance, his fields, which were stubborn, and unproductive, like all in that part of the country, and scarcely sufficed for his support. It happened once, many years ago, as he was resting by the side of a piece of water, that lay in wild and lonely silence, at the foot of a mountain, which contained many treasures, guarded by the spirits of the wave, that he fell asleep; and as he slept, he dreamt that a billow approached him, rolling along the dark deep, and a beautiful female figure stepping out of the water, nodded to him and said—

"'I bring you a treasure, my dear.'

"'That's a thing I am desperately in want of,' replied my father, in his dream; 'and pray what is it you intend giving me?'

"'In the first place, myself;' answered the vision, and my father was terrified, for the creature was a water-nymph or fairy; in fact, an evil spirit: she made no reply, however, and in a loving tone, she continued—

"'You may think in your heart what you please. I, however, shall not leave you: and, lest you should prove unkind, I hereby bind myself to you for ever.' And so saying, she drew a band of pearls from beneath the water, and bound them, in the shape of a noose, about my father's head; so that, in the struggle to free himself, he awoke, and heard only a sound resembling, as it were, shouts of laughter in the distance.

"Rubbing his eyes, he at first congratulated him-

self that it was nothing more than a dream; but how great was his horror, when, in order to discover the cause of a strange coolness which he felt about his temples, he put up his hand, and found a wreath twined round his brow!—a wreath composed of sea-rose,—a flower especially held sacred to the water-nymphs. His peace was now gone; for he was too well convinced that the fairy was in love with him, and he bewailed aloud his unhappy fate."

The baroness here interrupted her niece, and angrily remarked, that Helen abused the patience of her highness with her childish stories.

"The truth, however," she continued, "is as follows. It happened, on the same day, when the sleeper was lying by the water side, that a young lady of good family, a cousin of my own, who was on a visit with her father, (a severe man) at a neighbouring country bathing place, happened to make a very long excursion, with her governess, to the spot; and having plucked the sea-rose, and composed a chaplet of them, she twined them in play about the sleeper's head—as he happened to take her fancy—and on his awaking, she took to flight, with a loud burst of laughter."

"What a pity, my dear aunt," replied the vexed girl, "to dispel so quickly the fair vision we had raised!"

The margravine rebuked the old lady for her testiness, and desired Helen to continue her story; who, evidently disconcerted, obeyed as follows:—

"A month after this was an unhappy time,—the French came and burned every thing in the

town, the village, and the watering place. The young lady fled with her sick father to the wild men's-meadow, and made speedy inquiry for the solitary black waters; and remembering the affair of the garland, thought who the man could be whom she had so adorned, and flew from with laughter, and then she also fell asleep, and dreamed that the placid waters swelled up, and from the wave arose a beautiful female figure, with black eye and sorrowful mien, and said, 'What do you mean by sleeping here? Your band of sea-rose has proved stronger than my band of pearls. Hence, therefore; and deliver the hero of the garland, whose welfare is now in the utmost jeopardy.'

When the young lady awoke, amazed and terrified, and looked around her through the dark night, her heart was torn with conflicting feelings. She suddenly felt, however, that she was attached to the young man with such peculiar and deep affection, as to allow of no separation, and that she must follow the destined impulse that tore her thence,—forgetful of her father, and of all other duties. She bent her step, accordingly, back to the watering place, restless as a hunted deer. At break of day she arrived at the demolished gate; and the blazing flames of the burning town directed her to a Capuchin monk, who was standing at the entrance as motionless as a stone, and in the act of praying.

" 'Do not run so fast, young woman,' he exclaimed, reproachfully. 'You come in good time to see him die. In ten minutes he will be shot. Almost beside herself, she fled to the church-hill,

where she saw the reflection of arms in the light, and a young man kneeling on the ground.

"'Heavens!' she exclaimed, 'it is he!'—and rushed forward, entreating his executioner to be allowed to embrace him."

"How remarkable!" exclaimed the margravine; "but you are evidently exhausted, and have need of rest, and your worthy aunt will, therefore, finish the story. I could never have believed, from the calm placidity of your youthful features, that you possessed such rich powers of fancy."

"Young Am Steig was the victim kneeling before the musketry," continued the baroness, taking up, with hurried accent, the half-finished recital; "he had paid a visit to a clergyman, his friend, with the view of affording him all the consolation in his power, and being taken up for a spy, was, as such, condemned to death. Lahault, the French commander, who was about to fusillade the young man, was touched by the apparition of the fair dreamer, who reminded him of a sweet girl of his own, whom he had left at home. The Frenchman had a feeling heart, and forgave the guiltless youth. The young people, thus brought together by the force of dreams and destiny, conceived an attachment, and the reverend father was requested to solemnize their union. He refused his assent, but, nevertheless, blessed the sacred union in silence, in order that the water-nymph might not have recourse to treachery. The affair was discovered to the father, who disinherited his daughter, and died, leaving her disconsolate at the slender patrimony of her husband.

"It was long before their union was blessed with

children,—a son and a daughter,—the former of whom they dedicated to the altar, on account of their sins; and the latter, your highness now sees before you;—and who, on account of the melancholy relationship of her mother with my own family, has a right to my protection and support."

"A wondrous story, indeed!" exclaimed the margravine, after a pause; "the fanatical prestige of dreams and destiny, which united your parents in marriage, seems also, my dear girl, to have laid hold of your own imagination. Such an impression *may* conduct you aright, but it is much more likely to lead you wrong. I will be the protector of your youthful affection. Henceforward, consider yourself as my daughter."

The baroness and Helen gratefully kissed the margravine's hands; who, disengaging herself, rose up, and rang the bell. An attendant entered, and was desired to call Madame Von Eberstein; who, accordingly, made her appearance in a few minutes. The princess, addressing herself to her, said, "You see here a young and amiable lady, whom I intend for your companion. I confide her to you, that her inexperience may be directed by your sound judgment, and that you may show her the world in that point of view which befits a young lady of rank. Her feelings are a little inclined to the enthusiastic; and the coolness of your character will correct this failing of youth."

Eberstein, after having cast a hasty glance at the person recommended to her, made her acknowledgment to the margravine for the favour conferred upon her, and was about to take her leave with

Helen, when the margravine begged to inquire respecting Helen's brother, and to know what had become of him? Helen blushed, and with a sigh was about to reply, when the door was thrown open, and the marshal of the household entered with his staff of office, and with him the steward of the household, with his silver sword, and the cup-bearer, with the drinking utensils; and intimation was given, in a solemn tone, that her highness's august presence was most respectfully expected at the dinner table.

The conversation was hereupon interrupted. The margravine took hold of the baroness's arm, and followed the marshal, who, with much pomp, strutted on before. At the door of the dining-room the margravine approached the new member of her court, and whispered to her and Von Eberstein, that she would dispense with their appearing at table to-day, and to-morrow also, in order that the young lady might become acquainted with the mansion and its neighbourhood.

The ladies now took their leave, and proceeded in silence to the apartments of Madame Eberstein, which consisted of two rooms and a parlour. The keeper of the wardrobe received instructions to prepare an apartment for Helen, while the cook occupied herself in getting up some little matters for supper.

When the two companions were seated, Helen's attention was strongly drawn to Von Eberstein, who had hitherto maintained a silence, and about whom there was something enigmatical, that would have furnished matter for reflection to a much deeper observer. Von Eberstein scarcely belonged

to the finest order of female beauty, although her physiognomy would have been deemed very agreeable, if an extraordinary degree of paleness had not overspread it. Her eyes were destitute of animation, and seldom looked on surrounding objects; her mouth, although adorned with a set of the finest teeth, remained closely shut; her chin indicated resolution, and the form of her neck much power. Her figure might be called perfectly well formed, but lifeless; the points of her delicate fingers were cold, her arms resembled the idea of marble, and a smile was never seen to irradiate her countenance, unless a smile of scorn, that was occasionally seen to hover about her mouth.

After Helen had examined sufficiently her companion's exterior, and had taken some refreshment, Von Eberstein suddenly asked her how she liked her apartment, adding that the margravine had paid her but a sorry compliment in intrusting her to the care of a person, whose attainments were limited to a knowledge of the duties of her situation, and who could never take part in the conversation and amusements that were suitable to the age of one like Helen.

"Why, you are hardly older than myself!" replied Helen, smiling; to which Von Eberstein replied, "that she was twenty-four," adding coldly, that Helen as she had already said, would have little reason to be pleased with her. "I do not understand," she said, "the art of amusing; in a few days you will have learnt all the duties required of you at court; you will then have no longer occasion for my services, and will execrate the architect of the castle, who built it so narrow, that

no place could be found in it for you, save an uncomfortable room with me."

Helen looked at the speaker with an appearance of inquiry and surprise; but Eberstein rising quickly, asked her to walk in the park, and the proposal being agreed to, the ladies descended together a flight of steps leading to a door of exit from the castle. Here Eberstein nodded to a footman, who was loitering in the passage, to follow them, and walked out with her companion. The evening was fine and calm. At the gate they met one of the guards of the household, armed, walking backwards and forwards, who permitted the ladies to pass without a word; and the wood, which commenced at a few paces distance from the castle soon extended its verdant canopy over the fair wanderers. Helen expressed herself alarmed at the darkness of their path, which was only illumined by the light of the glow-worm, and intimated a wish to return home.

"How childish!" exclaimed Eberstein, "do you see behind us the yellow livery of our attendant? Are you frightened at the harmless glow-worm? If you cannot endure the refreshing gloom of night, and the trust-worthy whispers of the trees, what business have you here, in a place where so much more awaits you? Come along, however, you timid girl, your wish shall be gratified."

A more cheerful path was now struck into, where the glimmer of variegated lamps was seen in the distance, and discovered to the ladies a broader grass-walk, on both sides of which a long arcade of massive structure led to the park. In this open walk, which served as a protection from the incle-

mency of the weather, parti-coloured lamps were burning in the midst of the rustling foliage of honeysuckle and evergreens, that crept up the verdure-covered walls, through the oval apertures, to the ceiling of the building. At that end of the arbour, which was contiguous to the flower-garden at the back of the castle, were also stationed some of the household guards; from whom, however, the ladies, as they proceeded towards the park, kept at a distance. The echo of steps, however, was now heard on the broad path, and shadows flitted dimly in the light reflected on the walls. A figure slowly, but with considerable bustle, was at length seen approaching.

"Good evening, sir marshal," exclaimed Von Eberstein. "So lonely here, and so forsaken?"

"Oh!" exclaimed the jolly beef-eater, "this evening work is killing me. While all the creation is enjoying the cool of the evening, I—over-burthened wretch that I am!—must honour the table of her highness with my presence; and no sooner is that ceremony over, and a nap in bed has become desirable, from sheer fatigue, than I must perforce gulp down the fresh air till her highness has concluded her evening prayers."

"Is the margravine at chapel?" inquired Mademoiselle Von Eberstein.

"Are we not in St. John's week?" demanded Herr Von Lingen in reply, as he shrugged his shoulders; but speedily assuming his former submissive air, he remarked that Madame Von Eberstein was not alone.

"Are you also appointed to the condition of a solitary?" he continued.

The young lady signified her dissent, and, with her companion, took leave of the marshal.

A path in the wood, in the back ground of which the pale light of some flambeaux was seen, brought the ladies nearer to some other individuals of the margravine's suite, and who, as well as Herr Von Lingen, were waiting her return.

"In yonder spot, our princess is engaged in prayers," remarked Von Eberstein, pointing towards the light. "If I am not mistaken, she is now on her way home."

In fact, the flambeaux now began to move, and the ladies stepped into the shade of the wood. A few attendants, the bearers of the lights, soon passed silently along; next followed the margravine, concealed by a long veil, and leaning on the arm of one of her ladies, sobbing as she walked. Two guards of the household brought up the procession.

After the little melancholy party had passed, Helen exclaimed in astonishment to her conductor, "What have I seen! How is it possible that the princess, whom I lately saw so cheerful, can have fallen thus suddenly into such grief?"

"If you are surprised at this," replied Eberstein coldly, "what will you say when you see still stranger things come to pass? Let us not linger, however; the evening is growing cool, and a longer walk would scarcely be advisable."

CHAPTER II.

" Be wise as serpents."

Helen passed a restless night, and arose with the first dawn of day. The view from her apartment was enchanting: the trees of the park lay far beneath her, and the birds were her neighbours. Helen was satisfied that her present residence was preferable to her former one, in a charitable institution, and in secret offered up her thanks to Providence, who had deigned to cast a favourable eye on a helpless orphan. With this thankful feeling of the heart, was united a prayer uttered by the lips, which her upturned eye seemed to direct to the throne of an ever-wakeful Deity. Unconsciously, the words were expressed audibly, and it also happened that Mademoiselle Von Eberstein, having stepped softly from her chamber, could hear that the innocent girl was praying for her deceased parents, for her benevolent aunt, and an unfortunate brother, in language at once deep felt and simple, and no less affecting than becoming.

Von Eberstein remained a silent auditor, enjoying what she heard without uttering a word, and not daring to disturb the fair suppliant, even after she had concluded. Helen remained for some time, gazing in silence on a fountain which appeared at some distance in the court.

"Does the water-nymph of the black lake dwell also in the spring?" thought she to herself, "and will the offended being be more favourable to me than to my parents, who, in spite of the priest's blessing on the marriage-oath, were pursued by misfortune?" To divert this unpleasant train of thought, she turned away from the window, and met, to her astonishment and almost terror, the gaze of her companion. With difficulty she suppressed an exclamation of alarm, for, to the pale countenance and the mysterious eyes before her, nothing was wanting but the watery veil and the golden crown, to complete the picture in her imagination of the woman of the lake. Helen, however, overcame her feelings, and gave her companion a friendly greeting.

After a short pause, in which the court dame seemed as if she wished to take in, at one glance, the whole form of the lovely Helen, she approached her in a much more friendly manner than on the preceding evening. She appeared to have laid aside, with the stiff court dress, a load that pressed upon her heart; and, in her morning attire, she was not only more affable, but more agreeable in her person. She inquired after the welfare of her fair neighbour, praised her ruddy complexion and fine figure, and drew her along playfully to breakfast, which was now ready. Here she placed the

best of every thing before Helen, helped herself last, and said, at length, as the young friend thanked her, with no less surprise than gratitude, for her kindness, " Let us leave off this formality and be friends at once. At court it is very necessary to have some one on whom you can depend; and, as nothing promotes friendship more than freedom of intercourse, we will, if you please, adopt the familiar style as often as we are together. The constraint of the dress circle will then leave to us a merely conventional formality, and tend to render our intimacy still more desirable and still more amiable; while the latter will console us for the usual fickleness of the great, and the vexations that attend it. Do you agree to my proposal, dear Helen ?"

Helen could hardly believe her senses; but, thus flattered, she had no power to withstand the advances of the proud court lady. She seized, with unaffected emotion, the proffered grasp of her hand, and yielded to the kiss of friendship, although an inexplicable feeling overcame her while clasped in Margaret's arms.

" Listen to me attentively," said Eberstein, drawing her curious and attentive friend nearer to her; — " I will now give you some necessary information concerning this court, and thus qualify you better, by the preliminary knowledge, for your duty to-day near the person of our august mistress. Her highness is of a devout, but somewhat superstitious temperament; unseasonably fond of power and of indulging her pride, and as unseasonably sunk in contrition and humility. By praising her piety to God, and benevolence to man, you have

the right key to her heart and her confidence. Your aunt knows this perfectly well, and submits to bend her proud feelings to the wishes and commands of the princess. Six young ladies are under your aunt, who is very strict in her attention to her duty, and is also chief maid of honour ; — the fair Clara Von Uffenbach, who yields to her from phlegm; the lame Maria Von Schaid, who yields from want of character and insignificance; the sly Henrica Von Werdenberg, from a politic habit of adulation ; yourself, from relationship and gratitude, and myself, from certain reasons."

" And who is the sixth ?" inquired Helen. Margaret was evidently at a loss how to reply.

" The good Lafare," said she, at last, " who has now leave of absence to see her friends in France ; thus much I know, but we shall know more when she returns."

" Proceed, if you please, my dear instructress."

" Our court circle will not take us long," replied Eberstein ; — " two ladies of the bed-chamber, of no importance, and ever at variance ; a Kastellanian, of whom I have nothing to say, but that she pretends to be a great ghost-seer ; and, with her, we conclude our list of ladies of higher rank. As to the gentlemen, they are not numerous, but important. There is the Marshal Von Lingen, whose piety is assumed to please his mistress ; he is constantly talking of being overwhelmed with business, yet has nothing at all to do ; he also fasts often, but, if the cook may be believed, his table is constantly covered with the choicest viands. Next comes the master of the horse, a good-natured lump of humanity, whose

sensibilities incline him to virtue, but who is, nevertheless, always doing wrong. The steward boasts the possession of every good quality under heaven, while, in reality, he is destitute of them all. Last of all comes the page, who is also cashier, a Dalmatian by birth, whom the princess brought from Florence, — a mysterious sort of personage, whom it will be more advisable for you to have as your friend than as your enemy. Of the commander of the margravine's twenty guards of the household I shall be silent; — he has here found a resting-place for his body; his mind has been at rest, ever since its birth, in infancy. In the Spanish war of the succession in the Low Countries, he was standard-bearer in the dragoons, and all his conversation is about Brabant beer and Flanders lasses. His post, in short, is in the guard-room, where he may usually be found from morn till even. I have thus furnished you with a complete catalogue *raisonné* of the court *personnel*, and with the individuals composing it, with whom you may come in contact. Your particular respect is due to your aunt, the marshal, and Herr Dandowich; and I should consider it to be not less my duty to recommend the margravine's confessor to your attention, if the man were not now in the prince's palace, at the point of death. This member of the priesthood has great influence with the princess, and is a zealot to the extreme point of superstitious belief and blind obedience. God grant that his successor may be of a milder character, and introduce a more cheerful sort of life, such as we had before! It is now, however, time that you should be at your post, and in attendance on her

highness; so be quick and dress yourself, and I will accompany you."

Margaret, who was now politeness itself, assisted the young Am Steig to put on her court dress, and led her, trembling in every limb, down the staircase to the first story of the castle, where the margravine slept. Margaret, who was acquainted with all the localities, passed the flight of steps leading to the saloon on the left, and threw open a suite of rooms, so splendidly fitted up, that Helen lost in wonder and curiosity much of her disquietude. Apartments were here seen adorned with silken tapestry, and covered with the figures of birds, in the gayest plumage. Rooms with moveable figures, in fantastic shapes, in the fashion of Italy;—Chinese mounted on elephants; Bacchus, mounted on leopards; Jonas in the jaws of the whale; St. George and the dragon, together with innumerable other figures, in the same style. By means of a string and pulley, the Chinese nodded, the whale opened his jaws, the dragon rattled his tail, and the peacock unfolded her splendid feathers in the mirror. Margaret showed these pieces of trickery to her friend, as they went along, and then, opening a side-door, they both stood in the anti-chamber.

"This stool is your place," whispered Eberstein, assuming the necessary etiquette, in presence of the lady in waiting: "Have the kindness to be ready for any service that her highness may require of you. You are near your aunt, whose post is near the dressing-table of the princess, and so long as the latter does not send for you, do not leave

this room, but be ready to receive those persons who may wish to have an audience of her highness. Should they be of the lower classes, you must take down their names and wishes, and convey them to the margravine, by the lady in waiting. Should ladies desire to be presented, have the kindness to converse with them, until the time arrives for their reception. The marshal of the household, and the Baroness Von Ehresheim have the privilege of the entrée, and Herr Dandowich enjoys the same right. The Countess Von Werdenberg will relieve you at noon, and you will then follow her highness to table."

With a familiar motion of the eyelid, Eberstein now so changed in her manner, bade adieu to Helen, who, seated opposite to the waiting-maid, was left to give herself up either to absolute inaction, or to the play of her own imagination.

The servant, who maintained a perfect silence, and was occupied in watching with her eyes the pendulum of the clock, and with her ears, every sound in the room of her mistress, was not a very amusing companion. Surprise at the change in Margaret Eberstein's conduct, so powerfully occupied Helen's mind, that she had no time for other thoughts, and the diffident girl was much delighted at hearing a bustle in the servants' hall, and seeing the folding doors fly open, and the Baroness Von Ehresheim, accompanied by two attendants, who brought in, in boxes, the princess's dress for the day.

The baroness, at her entrance, merely nodded, and whispered one word to her niece, and then

desired the waiting-woman to go into the margravine's room, and open the windows and curtains. After this was done, the keeper of the wardrobe entered, and laid down the boxes containing the clothes. The mistress of the household next appeared; the waiting-woman returned to her post; and the silence, which was only interrupted by the authoritative tones of the baroness, and the rustling of her dress, was again restored. Footsteps, however, soon followed in rapid motion. The attendant on her highness's toilet now presented herself, and was admitted with her assistants. Soon after she had finished, the princess's bell rung, and was replied to by a peal on the bell of the servants' hall. Breakfast was brought in to her highness's room; and Helen still continued sitting, wondering what her own business was to be.

The scene now became more imposing. The marshal entered in a half gala dress, and made a slight obeisance to Helen: the waiting-woman, after she had knocked three times at the princess's door, officiously took her station, prepared to discharge *her* office at the breakfast-board near to the next most important personage at their Lilliputian court: the steward of the household, with the bill of fare of the day; the master of the horse, with the inquiry whether her highness would choose to ride in her carriage or on horseback; the captain of the household-guards with his report, containing nothing, on the occurrences of the past night,--all appeared in succession, waiting for the introduction which was usually granted them in a body.

The captain, with his flat, broad, unmeaning

face, and formidable moustaches was the only person, who, in his peculiar way, took any particular notice of the beautiful young lady just added to the court circle. Helen, however, put a check on the bold hero, by some smart replies, such as country girls usually know how to make, and forthwith, with his two companions, he stood as mute as a statue. Among the group, was seen a little, dark-complexioned, ill-looking man, who bent his yellow physiognomy towards Helen, in order to gain a nearer view of her, with his small inquisitive eyes, and who, without further ceremony, entered the margravine's room.

"Dandowich!" exclaimed Helen to herself, and was confirmed in her opinion, when she saw him return, and without ceremony go up to the steward and the captain of the household guard, take their bill of fare and report out of their hands; and, addressing the master of the horse, coolly inform him, that her highness had no occasion for his service to-day. These three individuals took their leave immediately; and Dandowich sent the papers in to her highness, and forwarded the bill of fare to the proper quarters. He then sat himself down in the corner opposite to Helen; took several accounts out of his pocket, and while appearing to examine them, cast between while a most scrutinizing glance towards the young lady. Helen, who observed his effrontery, reddened with shame and vexation, and was about to leave her place,—from which she had hitherto not stirred,—when the door opened, and a tall man, dressed in black, and somewhat embarrassed, although not without something imposing in his manner, entered. As

the waiting-woman did not stir from her seat, and Dandowich only cast a piercing glance at the stranger; Helen (having remarked that the visitors on business addressed themselves to her,) stood up, for the purpose of advancing a few steps towards the stranger, who was looking around him. The individual now bowing before her, appeared to be a man of about thirty years of age: his hair fell over his shoulders, in disorder; his countenance, although well formed and agreeable, was careworn and abstracted, as if furrowed by heavy sorrow or mental conflict. His eyes, deep sunk in his head, were dark and of varying expression,—they were frequently cast towards heaven, but more frequently to the earth, being seldom directed to the individual opposite to him. His dress had something of the clerical fashion, and he held in his hand a sealed packet.

"My name," he said, in a soft tone, "is Leodegar; I beg the favour to be permitted to wait on her highness, the margravine. I come with a commission from the worthy Dean Adrian, and am most respectfully intrusted with a letter for her highness; might I beg, therefore, the favour of being assisted in my views, by the young lady whom I have the honour of addressing?"

"Will your reverence be pleased to wait," replied Helen; "Her highness is very busy at present, but your office and message will secure you an audience as early as possible."

The young man blushed, cast down his eyes, and added: "You have given me a title that does not belong to me,—I am not in the sacred office."

It was now Helen's turn to blush. She was

painfully silent, and stood as if upon thorns, wishing most devoutly that the icy waiting-woman or the spy, Dandowich, would interfere. Leodegar soon recovered his presence of mind, and stept towards the window; Helen had an opportunity of remarking, unobserved, his noble figure and distinguished air, which had something more attractive from the traces of suffering imprinted on his physiognomy; his eyes and whole demeanour disclosed a mind of peculiar and powerful formation. The cast of his figure, also, evinced the same marked qualities,—the eyes, mouth, and arms of the stranger, appeared to be under a sort of discipline, as if they were placed under control, but might over-pass certain limits prescribed them. In this constraint, perhaps, originated the traces of suffering on the brow and the lips; and from the painful direction of the blood towards the close and reserved heart, might have arisen the melancholy paleness of the countenance.

Helen had not sufficient acuteness to analyze the impressions made upon her by the stranger; but she felt attracted towards him as to a kindred soul. She forgot her situation, lost in the contemplation of the individual, who never turned his head; and she was almost angry with the marshal, who soon passed through the room, followed by the aunt and the waiting-woman, who now addressed herself to Helen with the inquiry—"if the gentleman was to be introduced?" An answer in the affirmative being of course returned, Helen soon saw Leodegar enter her highness's room, where he stood before her as embarrassed as Helen had been at his departure, and he could hardly stammer out a few

words of introductory compliment. The princess commenced by remarking, that he had brought a letter and news from her excellent friend, and by expressing a devout hope that the intelligence might be agreeable.

"Even so it is," replied Leodegar; "praised be our heavenly Father; for his mercy is unbounded! His reverence, who seemed already among the dead, is risen from his sick-bed, and would appear before your highness to-day if he were not prevented by the weakness consequent on his illness, and on which account he will still be confined to his room for several weeks. But his pen will speak to your highness instead of his lips."

The margravine received the packet from Leodegar; and, opening it eagerly, read, with increasing pleasure, as follows:

"Illustrious princess! I have been raised from the dead! and the first person whom I send to your highness is an angel of the Lord in the flesh, who has made me whole through his prayers. He is no common mortal, but worthy to reflect honour on the highest situation in the church,—if his modesty would permit him to fill it. His anticipations are the truth; his predictions may be compared with those of the Gospel. He seeks a country on this earthly sphere, and will find it near your highness,—if you consult the salvation and the welfare of your illustrious house, to which the more than mortal Leodegar is most devotedly attached. He will explain in person what my weak hand is unable to write.—ADRIAN."

The princess perused and re-perused this letter with increased amazement; and the same feeling

was depicted on her countenance while she gazed on the man, the object of such eulogium, who stood before her speechless, and apparently the least distinguished of mortals.

"What is your name?" she inquired, after a pause.

"I have none: I am not worthy of one."

"What is your profession? No doubt it is that of the sacred ministry."

"No, most gracious lady! I have only taken the first vow: of full consecration I am not worthy."

"Of what country are you a native?"

"The common country of our Father in heaven. The earthly name I have forgotten. Why seek to know the cradle, when we know not where the grave may be?"

"The dean has strongly recommended you."

"I do not deserve his goodness."

"Can I be of any service to you?"

"Your highness is disposed to jest with my mean condition."

"You have delivered my worthy confessor from death."

"I have done nothing but pray: God does all."

"I will reward you, who are his instrument."

"Even if I deserved reward in the matter, it is not in your highness's power to reward me."

The countenance of the margravine became inflamed at this reply, and she demanded quickly what he meant.

"Creation cannot compensate for the life of an insect," replied Leodegar calmly; "how then could the most powerful monarch on earth give adequate value for the life of a human being?"

"You are right," replied the margravine; "the expression I used was unsuitable. I am still anxious, however, to do you a service."

"Will your highness allow me to spend some time in your vicinity?"

This demand puzzled the margravine a little, and she begged him to explain himself.

"The Lord is with the pious: I am near to the Lord when I am with your highness."

The margravine mused for a moment, and said, slowly, "You are a mysterious being: you come hither a wandering philosopher."

"Alas!" replied Leodegar, smiling, "where is wisdom? I am a poor, insignificant, unworthy creature, occupied only in seeking God and virtue. My ghostly instructor and superiors have esteemed me, although unworthy, because one who was lame walked, and a sick person rose up, when I prayed with them. I know well that God is the great workman, and all I desire is a lonely cell, to protect me in worshipping Him; and no where do I find his fear so nobly displayed, as by your highness."

The margravine felt herself flattered; but she once more examined the packet from Adrian, and the papers, together with his letter, which it contained. An open and very brief note attracted her attention.

A tear stood in her eye. She turned over the paper, and then putting them all together, replied quickly to Leodegar—"A cell under sure protection shall be yours, if you will accept my hermitage in the park. The abode is only fit for an anchorite, and is destitute of comfort. In the meantime ——."

"The fame of this temple of grace is not unknown to me," replied Leodegar, delighted. "How can I evince to your highness, my sense of your kindness?"

"An opportunity will soon occur. Since God has granted so much efficacy to your prayers, he will not deny it for the bodily and spiritual welfare of a person who is very dear to us, and whom I would recommend to your care and inviolable secrecy."

The audience here terminated, Leodegar took his departure, and the margravine withdrew to her private apartment, to reflect on the strange interview which she had just had, and to peruse the letter once more which she had found in the packet.

"This unhappy attachment! — is it then not yet broken off?" she exclaimed, disconsolately, to herself, "and am I never to cease combatting my dearest feelings with the weapons of duty? Unless Heaven be propitious I can truly set no term to this righteous struggle with duty. I can give no counsel to my anguished and troubled heart. And what if Leodegar should be the instrument? Adrian's recommendation;—that of the bishop and the seminary;—the man himself, so undervaluing the ascription of all spiritual worth; so extraordinary in his gifts and enthusiasm; whose demeanour makes the most distinguished averse to press for information regarding his early history! I am lost in expectation! But the attempt shall be made, to restore peace to myself, and to those dearest to me. May the youth spurn from him the powerful spell by which he is held! Whoever roots out this

passion from his breast, will snatch from him the dagger of the self-murderer!"

So saying, she looked round the room, the walls of which were adorned with mirrors and curious pictures, and placing her finger on her mouth, exclaimed in a low tone, as if in self-condemnation and warning—"How can I here speak of the annihilation of the passions—here, in this room,—the temple of vanity and of frivolous recollection?"

Sighing deeply, she struck her forehead in the vexation of her mind, and ringing the bell violently, Helen made her appearance—"Has the daily post arrived yet from the seat of the margrave, or a messenger from our winter castle," inquired the princess?

Helen replied in the affirmative, and handed two letters to her highness.

"The margrave is coming to-morrow," she exclaimed, joyfully, after she had broken the letter with the large seal of the family arms. Her joy, however, soon vanished, when she had read the second letter from the winter castle. Much chagrined, she placed it in a superb chatoulle of bronze and steel, that was fastened by the fire place, and leaning on the marble mantle-piece, she remained sunk for some moments in her own reflections.

Helen stood, embarrassed, before her, and endeavoured to divert her attention by gazing on the curiously-adorned walls around her. Between mirrors, divided into golden compartments, numerous small paintings were disposed, among which, the portrait of the margravine appeared, perhaps sixty times repeated in various forms, and in the bloom of youth and beauty. She was also represented

with a boy in her hand, and in every variety of costume;—sometimes in the fantastic dress of a huntress, with a half-moon, the emblem of Diana in her hair, and a falcon perched on her wrist; sometimes in the costume of a Turkish lady of distinction, covered with diamonds; and sometimes in the variegated feathery attire of an African queen. In another place she appeared as a blooming shepherdess; in another as Fortune, with her golden ball; as a Spanish donna; as the Grecian Helen; as a daughter of the Emperor of China, and in many other characters,—all of which were concluded by a portrait, representing her with the little boy, in deep mourning dress. Helen's extreme curiosity did not escape the observation of the margravine, who inquired, in a smiling and affable manner, if she recognized the original of all these portraits?

Helen assured the margravine that she did.

The princess compared the portrait with the portrait over the fire-place, and continued to remark, with a sigh, "Such I was in past years: time flies, my dear girl. These portraits represent the masks in which I appeared at the court of the duchess, my sister, in Italy. The youth in my hand is my son, the present reigning prince. His affectionate attachment has caused these memorials of vanity to be placed here; and, however gladly I could wish them removed, yet I dare not venture to offend his feelings by such a proceeding. He is, indeed, my only happiness on earth."

"How happy he must be to have so fond a mother as your highness!" exclaimed Helen,

deeply affected by the recollection of her own orphan state.

"His affection makes me give credit to this," continued the princess, with maternal affection. "This conviction makes me surmount many things; for whatever may happen, as you, my child, have remarked, 'love never dies!'"

"So the lady-abbess, and my mother when she died, told me; and my father also, when he followed her to that place where love shall never more be separated from the object of its attachment."

"The simplicity with which you speak of these kindly feelings, convinces me that you were tenderly attached to your parents."

Helen could only reply by tears of affection.

"And," continued the princess, "that you are most affectionately fond of your brother."

"Alas!" replied Helen, "I can now scarcely remember him. I was hardly four years old when he was carried across the Rhine to the bishoprick of Luttich, to be educated for the priesthood, as my parents had vowed, in order to atone for their sins. I have, however, continued to pray for him every morning and evening; and even then, when my father told us, that Leo had run away from school, and had entered the army. Since that time, I have received no tidings of him; and, no doubt, he has long since perished;—poor deluded young man! who, by this one step, plunged his parents in ruin!"

"In ruin!—how?—what do you mean?"

"Yes, my lady: and what a crime it must be

to prevent the fulfilment of his parents' vows! God removed his hand from him, and the lady of the black lake again acquired complete power over him, for she was constantly enraged that my mother had alienated the affections of my father from her."

"Girl! girl!" exclaimed the margravine, irritated, and yet grieved, "what superstitious nonsense you are talking! Can you possibly believe that beings live in the water similar to that which your father saw in his dream?"

"I am fully convinced of it," replied Helen, warmly, but respectfully. "Our confessor taught us that there are good and evil spirits,—witches and fairies; and he never failed, on the festival of the three holy kings, to inscribe the sacred letters on every part of the house of God, that the evil powers might be prevented from entering."

"Your confessor was in the right," replied the princess;—"the sacred cross and letters are, however, of avail only on the other side of the threshold. The evil spirits in the bosom of man himself often display greater energy than any devils or enchantments. Beware of giving way to the power of imagination, and to that feeling of love, which you now describe so innocently, on account of its having been always prized and valued by your parents, during their long and afflicted married state, as their only happiness.—Are your parents the only individuals whom you have ever loved?"

"My parents, the lady-abbess, sister Hippolita, and the wax figure of the blessed child Jesus,

which I received as a present, and which I decked out on holy-days, as splendidly as my slender pocket-money would allow."

"What simplicity!" thought the margravine to herself, and approaching Helen, quickly added aloud; "Get yourself ready to set out in my coach to-morrow, for the winter castle: my private chapel requires setting to rights, and you shall arrange it for me."

Helen having been set at freedom by the Countess Werdenberg, followed the margravine to table, and had no better news to communicate to her next neighbour, Margaret Eberstein, than the speedy arrival of the margrave, and her own little expedition to the winter castle. This intelligence was far from producing an agreeable effect on Margaret. Helen remarked that her features assumed a stern rigidity, which did not wear off for some minutes. This sudden inflexibility soon gave place to great restlessness, and she complained in a whisper to Helen, of the constraint of court etiquette, which would hardly allow even the sick and unwell, to leave their place at the table. Dinner, at last, being over, Margaret was able to beg an hour's leisure conversation with her friend.

"For Heaven's sake," replied the Baroness Ehresheim, who was applied to for leave, "do not let her highness know that you have been unwell. You know how she dislikes having sick people about her;—the horror she has at medical prescriptions;—and that she thinks a devout prayer of more efficacy than all the preparations of the laboratory. Keep out of the way, therefore, till

you are recovered. My niece shall bear you company."

The ladies now directed their steps again towards the park. When they had arrived at a more secluded part of it, Margaret threw herself on a bank, and clasping both the hands of Helen, exclaimed with inexpressible anguish : " Is the margrave coming to-morrow, and will you leave me? Is it possible that you are going to the winter castle? You must indeed let me take your place. I cannot stay here. I will — I must go instead of you. When he is here, my place is in town."

Helen was excessively shocked at this sudden explosion of mysterious grief, and, much alarmed, inquired the cause. Margaret now fell into a state of melancholy silence. She seemed as if musing, and then exclaimed : " Be calm — I am in the wrong. The margravine is right in sending you away, and my heart will be a gainer. What does it signify although it should suffer a few hours longer? The margrave returns home at night, as the small accommodation of the castle will not allow him to pass even a night in it, as befits his quality ; and, after all, his appearance here will seem only like a dream."

" What have you, then, to do with the prince?" inquired Helen, prompted by eager curiosity. " What is the matter with this man, who is represented by all to be so mild and gracious?"

" Can you keep a secret?" said Margaret, looking as if she would penetrate into the soul of her friend. " Would the pleasure of turning the laugh against your companion, induce you to become a

traitor? Swear to me, solemnly, that you will not divulge what I am about to tell you!"

Helen, much alarmed, promised all that was demanded of her, and Margaret then drew her to her, and kissing her, continued, in a low tone, as follows:—

"Yes! I also was once all confidence, but miserably have I been repaid. Hence my distrust and coldness. Nothing but innocence, like thine, can render me more communicative, and even to this I feel myself summoned by compulsion. Never have I met with such childlike purity as thine. The promise, both of thy mind and body, is too exquisite, not to create a fear respecting its future fate. You are not adapted for this world, and I, therefore, would guard you against it. Have no confidence in the margravine, who will one day wed you to some wretched hanger-on of the court. I give you the same advice regarding your aunt, who, having made her fortune by a rich marriage, 'loveless, joyless, unendeared,' would compel you to the same bondage. Above all, have a dread of, and keep at a distance from, the margrave,—whose heart is as black as his exterior is prepossessing. Every word that falls from his lips distils a honeyed poison; his every look is an insidious dart, aimed at unsuspecting hearts; his arms are nets spread by an evil spirit; and his hands caress and stab you to the heart, at the same instant."

Helen dared not attempt to comprehend the meaning of all this, and it seemed to her to be contrary to good manners to inquire more narrowly into the purport of her friend's language,—she therefore remained silent, not fully convinced that

Margaret sincerely desired her welfare, and that the son of her mistress was a being to be suspected and avoided.

Margaret continued as follows:

" Act truly and honestly by me, for I love you as myself, and as my only light in this dark world. Think not what I ask of you to be insignificant. Our lives shall be knit together, without a care, as one. Who can be richer on earth than we? And, at last, how rapturous the prospect to live and pray together in some silent retreat, devoted to Heaven,—there, united in sympathy,—there, united in death!"

Helen's eye glistened, and she sunk on her friend's breast, exclaiming, with emotion;—" Now I know you truly! you are not cold,—you are not indifferent to all earthly concerns, as the margravine affirmed, and as my aunt believed; but you have a higher object in view,—in heaven!"

" Show yourself to the world, only in that light in which you would wish it to see you, therein you have the secret of my art," continued Eberstein; " the world has turned me into stone, but within this breast beats a warm heart. My piety, such as it is, is without ostentation, and on that account differs much from the religion of the margravine, who has erected that building," pointing to the hermitage,—that now shone forth amidst the trees,—" as the altar of her gloomy and sanguinary faith; and where, with superstition and delirious passion, she inflicts that bodily penance on herself, which, perhaps, is well merited by her previous life. But on this we shall say nothing. The gates of our temple of friendship stand open, and

we will pass through them to arrive at the gates of a holier retirement. Before we arrive thither, there is a work, however, to be completed, which I will not now describe to you, in order to put your constancy to the proof, but in your share of which you will begin to-morrow to take part, under the pledge of that secrecy, which you have so solemnly promised me.

"It happens admirably well, that your departure is fixed for to-morrow: I have a sealed letter to give you, which you have to forward in the following manner. When you arrive at the castle, beg the mistress of it to show you the room with the purple leather tapestry; it is in the modern part of the building, opposite the north side. Some time ago I lived in this room during the winter months, but by command of the princess it was dismantled last spring. You must, however, pretend to have an order from the margravine, otherwise it is to be feared you will be unsuccessful. When you are in the room listen attentively at evening for a human voice engaged in singing a hymn. Should you, then, have the good fortune to hear some one,—call out, with a loud voice, into the chimney of the room, the word,—'Sancta Mater,' and repeat these words several times, a string will afterwards be let down the chimney, and to this string you will attach the letter, giving a sign that it may be drawn up. Perhaps an answer may afterwards be received through the same channel, but most probably not. In any case, and however the attempt may be made, I depend on your forwarding the letter, if received, to me unopened,—and on your not confiding it to any other person."

Helen promised entire obedience, but added some delicate reproaches on account of her not being deemed worthy to be made acquainted with the mystery. She was unable even to suppress an emotion of dread, when she added,—" Am I not acting in this contrary to the oath which I yesterday took at my aunt's hands, when I swore that I would engage in nothing that might prove prejudicial to my princely mistress?"

" What a self-tormentor you render yourself by such a squeamish conscience," continued Margaret, in a bitter tone; " take my word for it, that by doing what I wish, you will never injure the margravine."

" I am then contented, and ready to execute your commissions," replied Helen, who put no more questions, and, linked in Margaret's arm, approached the hermitage. This building was of tolerable size and height, surrounded with solid walls, and provided with a tower-clock. It stood in the centre of a small meadow, in which the summer flowers of the forest grew in such abundance, that the gravel-path, leading to the chapel, was overgrown with them. A lovely bit of forest scenery surrounded this quiet and rural spot, the only way of access to which was from the castle through a retired and labyrinthine path in the wood. In past times, before the wood was opened up, a murder was committed here, by a feudal serf, on the body of his lord, who had been prompted to the crime by his master's tyranny. The body was flung into the neighbouring brook. In remembrance of the deed, a cross was erected on the bloody spot, as was the custom in former

times. Deep sunk in the pliant earth, and overgrown with green moss, it was now scarcely seen to rear itself above the luxuriant grass. As they approached, they were startled by perceiving a man sitting on the stone, his hat drawn deep over his eyes, his hands crossed on his knees, and looking downwards on a basket of flowers that stood at his feet.

"Leodegar!" whispered Helen to her companion, who replied —

"What! that singular being, the missioner, who has revived the miracles of the Gospel at the prince's town residence? Let us approach, for I am anxious to know something about him."

Leodegar, at this moment, turned his head towards the ladies, and addressed them in a conciliating manner, without leaving his seat. Helen, in some agitation, replied in a similar way; but, as Margaret appeared shocked at his rudeness in not rising, he remarked it, and begged the ladies' pardon for not leaving his seat.

"I cannot recommend this cross, the memorial of a savage deed, as a resting-place for you; as for myself, I am wearied, and must still repose here for some minutes."

"Employ the time then," replied the good-humoured Helen, "in telling us how you were pleased with the audience granted you by her highness."

Leodegar's countenance lightened up at this inquiry. "Her highness has appointed me to be the guardian of her temple," he replied, in a delighted tone; "this is the day on which I enter on my office, and would not omit decking the altar

of the gentle virgin-mother with the flowers that grow here so luxuriantly. Is it not wonderful, and a proof of the great goodness of our Creator, that even out of the ashes of a tyrant, such balsamic odours, and lovely forms and colours should arise!"

Margaret's attention now became rivetted.

" And all these flowers," continued Leodegar, holding up a handful of them, — " all these elegant and delicate-textured beings possess a mysterious life of their own, with feelings, and joys, and sorrows, far more exquisite, yet akin to ours! How the leaves fade away beneath the burning influence of the sun! How languishes the flower-bell after the refreshing dews of night! — how proudly it shows itself to the rising day, adorned with pearls, clearer than purest crystal! — how elated when the wanton bee dares to suck its treasured sweets! — how quickly it dies when torn from its native soil! Is there not here a human type! The meaning of flowers, how simple! how prophetic to the boy who inquires respecting the future in the star-flower! — to the maiden who looks in the meadows for hope and love! — to friends, who place the wreath of innocence on the grave of the departed! — to the few pious, who see, in universal creation, only the pages of a vast Bible! These yellow flowers, are they not the golden lamps of maidens? — these white crowns, the star that led the wise men? — this purple trefoil, the sacred drops that fell in bloody sweat from our honoured Lord?"

The ladies listened with astonishment. Helen, stirred to her inmost heart, replied, with unfeigned

admiration, "You are a wonderful instructor, Leodegar; — you fill all nature with life and meaning, and never more will a desert to me appear dreary and waste."

"The knowledge of universal life," he continued, "is a doctrine unknown to those who live in cities. I have found my school open in the wilderness. My youth was lonely; my companions were the everlasting stars of heaven and the fleeting creations of earth; through them I have learned that, in death itself, there is life; that the air is eloquent, and the streams live, — not merely the dumb fishes that animate their depths."

"These are my feelings!" exclaimed Helen, with astonishment, — "that is *my* belief! Where is your native place?"

Leodegar gazed on her in silence; their eyes met; but he only smiled, with an expression of secret anguish, and standing up, with his arms spread towards heaven, he replied, "My Father's house is great; it was on a barren corner of His vast and beautiful garden that I was reared. Barren fir-trees have overshadowed it, and a dark and mysterious sea washes it."

"A sea!" exclaimed Helen, breathless.

"A wonderful sea," replied Leodegar, "that conceals, beneath its melancholy and unruffled surface, a race of fairy-folk, as tradition tells. In former times, it says, they were very kind and friendly, and often, when the country housewife rose in the morning, she found the house in order, the fire burning on the hearth, the goats milked, the stable cleared, and the rooms arranged. All

that, however, has now ceased, as the people have degenerated, and, ever since, the banks of the water have become gloomy; the morass on its banks has grown deceitful, and where the golden gentian formerly bloomed, all has become a desert. The sea-rose, indeed, is often seen swimming on the dark, narrow water, the harmless image of peace, but its appearance is deceitful. Storms sleep in the bosom of the lake, and break loose, if, at any time, a stone, thrown by a rash hand, strikes the dark shining mirror."

"Heavens!" exclaimed Helen, in breathless emotion, "you are describing my native place!" and she unconsciously laid her lovely hand in Leodegar's; but he almost instantly withdrew his own while Margaret privately made Helen aware that she had been guilty of a breach of good breeding. The innocent girl blushed deeply, even till the blood dyed her neck and brow, and she could only add, "I mean, my native place is the Men's Meadow."

After fixing his eyes upon the fair speaker, and considering a little, Leodegar observed, that he might possibly be a countryman of hers, and, therefore, begged to ask her name. Helen told him, and also that of her friend. He paid but little attention to the name of Am Steig; the name of Margaret Eberstein struck him more forcibly. "Eberstein!" he repeated, slowly, and turned a long and piercing look, contrary to his custom, towards the young lady. He then made a slight obeisance, and said, directing his discourse to both the ladies; "I cannot allow you, noble ladies, to leave this little territory, which has been confided

to me, without requesting your acceptance of a simple gift as a memorial of your visit."

They were now at the entrance of the path into the wood. Leodegar bowed to the ground, plucked a violet from the fragrant skirt of the wood, and presented it to Helen.

"May your fate," he said, "be that of this flower: like it, lonely, blossoming, shielded from rain and lightning, from tears and sorrow; and, like it, may you be clasped, in holy transport, to some uncorrupted and faithful breast!"

Helen's hand trembled violently, like her heart, while she took the flower.

Turning to Margaret, Leodegar then said: "And what shall I give to you?" uttering these words slowly, and with his eyes alternately fixed on her and on the ground. "This," he said, reaching her a handful of red berries from the mountain ash; adding, "Are you like these, ripe for the gathering?"

Helen was at a loss to imagine how this strange gift would be received. Her friend took it from him, however, quickly, and with goodwill; and, shaking the berries, replied: "They are not yet ripe, although ripening;" and then returned them to Leodegar, looking earnestly at him, and bidding him good-bye, in which Helen, more timid and agitated, also joined.

CHAPTER III.

"Repent, in sackcloth and ashes!"

The evening bell in the tower of the hermitage had pealed its usual summons, when the margravine, in spite of the threatening appearance of the heavens, set out for her private chapel, accompanied by a few female attendants; who, as usual, remained at some distance. Helen alone was permitted the privilege of attending the princess, who found herself very much indisposed, into the interior of the sanctuary. As she entered the door, the maiden felt herself seized with a pious awe. The building had been constructed after a plan of the margravine's, and consisted of four apartments that were placed in a circle around the chapel itself. Each of these rooms, that stood open and empty, was inlaid with the rinds of trees, and was provided with a few pictures of saints and wretched stools. A large window in each looked into the chapel; and a smaller one, placed very high, and covered with grating, looked out on the open country. One of these rooms was for cooking, as the margravine, who, during fast-days spent great part of the time here, prepared her food with her own

hands. Another room served as an oratory; and in the third were placed figures of the holy family as large as life, and represented sitting at a table, to which the princess herself carried victuals, that were afterwards distributed among the poor. The fourth room was intended as a sleeping apartment for the pious, who lay on a wretched mat at the feet of an image of the blessed Virgin. In the chapel, that formed the middle part of the building, there was a lamp before the altar, kept constantly burning. Large figures of saints stood on the cornices and over the doors; and numerous figures were seen of the penitent Magdalene, with long descending locks, seated on the ground at the foot of the cross. A few stools, for the devout to kneel on, were scattered about in the chapel, which was only illumined by the day-light through the yellow windows of the cupola. The melancholy light produced by the rays of the evening sun struggling through the "horizontal misty air," and by the dull light of the lamp before the altar, the grave figures of the saints, and the care-worn and wasted countenance of the penitent princess,—filled Helen's heart with shuddering. This was still further increased by her perceiving on the steps of the altar a scourge of cords, a large crown of thorns, a scapulary inwoven with iron thorns, and spotted with blood; and she inwardly thanked Heaven when the margravine requested her to withdraw with the rest, and to shut the door of the chapel, and not to give away the key to any one till she heard the signal from the bell to return.

Helen obeyed, and the margravine listened, with the looks of one overwhelmed with grief, and who

wishes to be alone, as the heavy lock of the door was turned on her, and all was still. Laying aside her veil, she threw herself on the cold stone floor, crossed her hands on her head, which was prostrate on the earth, and prayed long, and in a low tone; and then rising up, and more loudly, and with tearful sobs, as follows: "Mother of all grace! Lord of all living! may my sins be removed from me!—Hear my prayer on this solemn day, devoted to the recollection of thy bloody and unjust death! Make me a partner of the grace that was granted to the Magdalene! Grant me peace and rest, and fulfil my dearest wish! May I again find the treasure, whose loss fills me with sorrow! and for which I hourly hear a voice from heaven, or from the purifying fire of purgatory, in a tone of melancholy, and of terrific solicitation! May I, O all ye saints! atone for a time of luxurious vanity and ruin! Let me suffer for them, and not my beloved son, whom may happiness always attend!—the happiness of overcoming his powerful and secret enemy;—the happiness of vanquishing himself, and the intoxication of the senses;—the happiness of finding innocence and truth in the arms of the bride whom I have selected for him, and of which I, alas! could not furnish him with the example, should evil await our house,—the hopes of which rest only on this solitary branch! O may it fall on me alone, O my God! for I have deserved punishment, and am ready to be a sacrifice to thine anger!" The tears that streamed from her eyes rendered her voice almost inaudible; but this was still more effectually drowned by a voice behind her back, which exclaimed, with hollow and solemn tone, "Yes!

indeed and in truth! this is a holy person; and her prayer ascends as frankincense!" Astonished, the margravine looked around her, and an instantaneous glow overspread her pale cheeks as she met the gaze of Leodegar, who, with outstretched arms and uplifted hands, advanced into the chapel from the door of one of the four rooms.

Overcome with rage, astonishment, and shame, she stood speechless and immoveable. Leodegar, in a fit of enthusiasm, threw himself at her feet, kissed the hem of her garment, and continued thus:—"Blessed be thou, who walkest with the angels! Blessed be thou, anointed and crowned penitent! who art striving for the fairest crown, the crown of the Saviour!"

"Why are you here?" stammered forth the margravine.

"I was concealed there, in order to be a witness of such sublime devotion," replied Leodegar, continuing in his place.

"Shameless avowal!" exclaimed the princess, burning with anger. "Stand up, what is the meaning of this?"

"Trample upon me, Queen of Penitence," he replied, as if penetrated with grief; "You cannot, however, extinguish the strange and pure affection that glows in my heart."

"How, fellow! are you mad? and when my attendants arrive and see this spectacle, which I cannot comprehend—"

"Comprehendest thou the sun-beam, that awakens the bud?—the lightning that produces the fire? You have a mysterious power over my destiny;—take the orphan to your heart, or let him

perish at your feet. Hearest thou the thunder storm above our heads?—the rain falling on the pool in torrents? Thine attendants are afar, seeking shelter from the storm, but God and Leodegar are near thee; fear not! Confide in my love, princess, as in that of a son. Oh, tell me that you will love me as such, in return!" The feeling of being forsaken—of all others the most painful to the great ones of the earth—depressed the princess. She endeavoured to find the bell rope, but Leodegar had taken the precaution to remove it. Here he stood before her highness, who, all agitated, with fixed eye and lips, quivering with indignation at the enthusiast's presumption, pierced him through with looks of reproach, while he spoke as follows, in a tender and impassioned tone:—" Condemn me not, associate of the holy! Remove from thee every feeling of insulting suspicion, for the Lord himself has awakened me, in love to thee; he has led me hither; he speaks by my mouth. I must be faithful to thee, despising title and state. In thee I have found a sister, a pilgrim in the path of light! How far removed am I from thy humility! How far from thy self-devotion! Mightier still, as the beauty of thy person beams on my miserable senses—far mightier do I feel my fainting hopes of affection and devotion turned aside, by the splendour of thy virtues."

" For Heaven's sake!" exclaimed the margravine, wringing her hands, " What do you mean by such language? Have you lost your senses?"

" God himself speaks through me;" replied Leodegar, with extatic mien, " and mysteriously links your fate with mine. Thrust him not away

from you. Do not, from some wretched affectation remove me from you, for thereby you will lose your guardian angel. The love and honour I entertain for you emboldens me thus; thy reputation inspires me; thy image enraptures me; thine aspect transforms me, and thy piety inflames my own. I am akin to thee, and will henceforward accompany thee, truly and watchfully, as a pure seraph the being on whom it watches. Banish me not from thee. God, by such a wretched instrument as myself, has healed the sick, raised the dying, spoken the words of prophecy, and at the present moment does so. The day on which thou drivest me from thee, brings mischief on thyself, breaks thy heart, kills thy son. I only am able to sustain your house, and *if* I do it, I am prompted only by my sacred love to thee."

A vivid flash of lightning at this moment lit up the chapel. The margravine screamed aloud. Her voice mingled with the fearful crash of thunder, and she fancied she saw all the figures of the saints around her, nodding to her from their places, and that a vivid flame played about Leodegar's head.

Horrified, the princess exclaimed—"You touch my heart—my keenest sensibilities! What! does the life of my son, the continuance of his race, depend upon you? Discover to me your mission, and suppress a language that insults my dignity, by the menacing violence of its expressions."

"Is then the language of attachment, of friendship and of love, more true, more filial than that of your ill-directed son—the language of menace?" replied Leodegar, vexed and mortified! "Do then the great ones of the earth desire that

their poorer brethren should always speak to them as a slave speaks to his tyrannical oppressor? Noble princess! We are in the presence of God, and he alone hears us. Suffer yourself, therefore, to be made acquainted with my homage, and swear to me on your life, not to deceive me, but to keep what I now say to you a secret from the world, and not to permit me to be condemned or imprisoned for my boldness."

The margravine looked at him earnestly, and he immediately exclaimed—"No, no! do not swear; thy gentle woman's heart is not cruel. Should you, however, deem it your wisdom so to do, reflect that your son's future condition depends upon me. What you do to me is done to him, and—listen to me once more—it will be only on account of the sweet, pure love for you, which God has kindled in my breast, that he will spare him—the careless and scornful son—in order that you, affectionate and noble mother, may not suffer."

Hearing voices without, Leodegar now suddenly disappeared within his lurking place.

The retinue of the princess, which had been frightened by the violent rain, and had taken refuge in the arbour, returned in a state of anxiety respecting their mistress, not having heard the signal-bell, and opened the chapel. The princess advanced towards them, quite exhausted, and leaning, without speaking a word, on Baroness Ehresheim and her niece, tottered towards the castle, and immediately shut herself up in her room. Horses were standing in the court-yard, in the livery of the margrave.

"His highness is arrived!" exclaimed Dando-

wich, meeting the princess, and with a loud cry of delighted astonishment she threw herself into her son's arms, who was drenched through and through in his travelling attire.

"Forgive me, my dear princess," said the margrave, smiling, "if the most unbidden of all guests thus meets you. It was my intention to have paid a visit to my great sheep-pastures, but having been overtaken by the storm, and my seat being at a greater distance than this castle, I have ventured to commence to-day my promised visit of to-morrow."

The margravine expressed her pleasure, but her apprehension, at the same time, that the limited accommodation of the castle would afford him but a poor night's lodging.

The prince assured his mother he had already found a lodging in the Kastellanei (chapelry), and begged permission to be allowed to change his clothes, and to repose a little from the fatigue of his journey. Respect, he added, was due to a parent, and it would hardly be becoming in him to remain longer in such a monastic building than to-morrow.

The margravine appeared uneasy at the seclusion of the chapelry, and wished to inform the captain, that he might set a watch about the house. The margrave was averse to this, and remarked playfully, that "he had a good sword, and was not afraid. What they could not perform, those brave nobles, Baron Von Westemberg and M. de la Montée would do, in case of need; whom I shall have the pleasure to-morrow of introducing to you

at a more convenient time, should they not happen to be already known to you."

He then pointed to a young man of warlike demeanor and dress, of fair and sprightly aspect, with light hair and reddish beard, who bowed gracefully to the margravine,—gracefully, and yet proudly,—the emblem of the margrave's cockade in his cap. The princess saluted him, although unknown to her, as well as Westemberg, whom she knew, in a friendly and affable manner, and begged both to watch over the safety of her son. She remarked, in parting, that as she stood in need of rest, her frame of mind would not permit her to carry on a longer conversation with the margrave.

The meeting then broke up, and the margrave, with his attendants, went to the chapelry, where the necessary apartments had been prepared for his reception. The noble visitors remained in the lower suite of rooms, while the prince made himself comfortable up stairs, and desired the keeper not to delay sending the margrave's valet to him as soon as he should return to the chapelry.

"Dandowich is already waiting in the antechamber," replied the waiting woman, curtseying, and he was accordingly desired to enter, and the female servant took her departure. After his highness had made himself certain that the doors and windows were all shut, he desired Dandowich to approach, and to lay aside all unnecessary ceremonial.

"Well," began the prince, "tell me how all is going on here—what changes have occurred, and what news?"

The Dalmatian shrugged his shoulders. "With the exception of a half-mad looking black-coat, whom her highness has appointed keeper of her hermitage, and a newly come court lady, there is nothing particular," replied Dandowich.

"It is Leodegar, the philosopher and divine," said the margrave. "The man carried on his strange tricks in the palace, and I was quite satisfied that Dean Adrian had got hold of him for my mother. She once was fond of the mystical. Her piety may promote my views, at which all pious subjects shrug up their shoulders, and at which my worthy uncle is exceedingly disturbed. The Enthusiast has nothing dangerous about him, so long as he is not made an instrument in the hands of the priesthood, and the seclusion of my mother's residence is a security against this."

Dandowich gave a silent nod of approval.

"How is it with more important affairs?" continued the prince. "No tidings yet of what has become of Lafare?"

"It is generally believed that the young lady is with her relations," replied Dandowich.

"It is not true," replied the prince; "I have sent messengers, and caused inquiry to be made, and I am quite sure in what I stated. She is concealed, Heaven knows where and how; my mother is guilty, perhaps, of weaknesses, but her conduct is ever straight-forward. My suspicions fell on a more dangerous person at this court,—Heaven have mercy on her, if I should detect her in it, and on you all, as you are here, if I should discover a conspiracy among you against me and that innocent creature!"

"We are all devoted to your highness," replied Dandowich.

"I might adopt stronger measures for arriving at my object," continued the prince, "and might clear my mother's household by force: but I love her too much, and know the tenderness with which she doats on me, too well, to permit me to offer any violence to her attachments and proceedings; but a worm gnaws at my vitals, and you must assist me to destroy it; you, who have watched my steps since childhood, and since I became a man, have shown yourself truly devoted to me."

"Your highness sets too high a value on me. What is it in my power to do?"

"Listen! that moment, when, at the risk of your own life, you rescued me, a thoughtless boy, from being precipitated from the falling balcony at Florence,—that moment awoke my gratitude; but that feeling was still further heightened by the disinterested information you communicated to me at my accession to government,—of the guilt of a beloved mother, which you made known with all the forbearance due to the weakness of a good woman; and yet with all the grief that becomes a servant anxious for the welfare of his lord. Before I can be in a condition to reward your confidence, I shall require your assistance still further; circumstances are now altered,—the boy who was intrusted to you by the margravine at Florence, and whom you brought to Germany, to be placed in obscurity with Burkard,—that boy, who, at the death of his protector was so quickly removed, has not perished in the storms of the world;—he lives;

I foresee ——, I know it, and he lives in my neighbourhood."

Dandowich clasped his hands together in astonishment, and could only ask by his looks,—"How? and where?"

The margrave continued; "It is only a few weeks ago, since the Baron Von Westemberg introduced a knight to me, whom he had formerly known in the service of the Stadtholder of the United Provinces, and whom he represented as brave, accomplished, enterprising, and poor. These qualities won my friendly feelings towards the stranger. I gave him the rank of lieutenant in my guard; and had soon to congratulate myself on my choice, as M. de la Montée was the means of discovering the plans of a villain, who intended setting fire to my castle,—prompted, no doubt, by some agent of the pope, whose hatred I have gained by not yielding to his follies. As the fellow contrived to make his escape from prison, no certain clue to his motives could be obtained. I singled out the lieutenant, and could not but remark the coolness with which he received these marks of my friendship, as if in fact, they were but due to his merits. Afterwards, I learned from the mouth of one of his confidants, a certain Von Peck, that the lieutenant once, to the astonishment of all who heard him, had spoken freely on the subject, to the effect, that I had done well to distinguish him with my friendship, for a time would shortly arrive when a higher sphere would be assigned to him. He would, in short, stand closer connected with the margrave than his uncle; and it only depended on the conduct of the

latter to decide whether he, De la Montée, should stand in a closer relation of friendship with the margrave than the uncle."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Dandowich, musing.

"My first care," continued the prince, "was to inform myself more closely respecting the family of De la Montée; but here many difficulties presented themselves. Some said he was from Lothringen, others that he was a French nobleman,—and in the latter character he represented himself to me. In his freer moments with his more intimate friends, he also stated that he was well known in my territories, and spoke of some of the most mountainous districts, as if they had been his home. The age, the expressions of this mysterious being, point too clearly, Dandowich! to his real character. Yes, De la Montée is that Isidor, whose birth was such an error, and whose life is now become a subject of grief to me."

"Why need your highness trouble yourself about this?" replied Dandowich; "your title cannot be called in question."

"The period, Dandowich, is threatening; the peace, that every where prevails, is on the point of being dissolved by warfare and revolution. The death of the emperor, without male issue, will be the signal for the flame of war to burst forth, unless a miracle prevent it. Should I fall under the attack of a rapacious neighbour, my family becomes extinct; all its hopes, unfortunately, depending on me. My uncle, the head of the second line in succession, is my bitterest enemy, because I do not acquiesce in his superstitious views, and have not the slightest inclination to resign my

patrimony to a disturber of the country. What an instrument in the hands of this man would be a bold enterprising person, believed to stand in the relation of a half-brother!—in the hands, too, of a man inflamed by superstition, who had his own brother put to death, because he appeared happier than himself, who wore the ermine!—I lose myself in speculation; but the stern necessity has arrived when I must free myself from the dangers that surround me."

"Your highness's sound judgment is your best adviser," remarked Dandowich: "your dependants await your commands."

"You must assist me," replied the margrave, "in arranging this affair; for I must see my way clearly before I act;—have you any recollection of the boy's features?"

Dandowich in vain endeavoured to recall the circumstances to his memory. A long period had elapsed; and he had never remarked that Burkard had brought the boy to court. He also asserted his ignorance of who they were that had been intrusted with the bringing up of Isidor, and whether the margravine had ever visited him. He thought, however, that he might venture to affirm, that she had never seen him.

The margrave walked up and down in a state of agitation, and at length exclaimed, "Would to Heaven that *I* only knew of this affair! but the man himself knows too much; and, indeed, he appears to know all. What confusion is on the point of breaking out! What vexation for me! What a source of grief for my dear mother, against

whom I can never think of appearing, notwithstanding her transgression."

"As, however, in the narrow circle within which the secret is kept, no better means can be found of unravelling the matter, I must employ my mother herself to clear it up, without her being aware of such a design. I will arrange it so, that natural affection, and the voice of nature, shall have an opportunity of speaking out. All this I will watch in secret; and for that purpose, have brought De la Montée hither. Under some pretext, I will leave him behind, while I pretend that I am setting out on a journey. To you I will then trust for my concealment, and to inform me when the princess and the lieutenant are to be together. Your influence with my mother, and the confidence reposed in you, will easily enable you, unobserved, to arrange the place of meeting, so that I may also, unobserved, be the third person in the drama."

"Very well," replied Dandowich; "and what then?"

"Then," replied the prince, your part is at an end, until it is my pleasure to assign you a new one. Last of all, friend Dandowich, be silent as the grave! Should the margravine hear a syllable!"——

"Never!"

"Or any one breathing—your punishment will be fearful. Strangers must never know the infirmities of our house, and my mother's heart must be protected from every vexation. A sudden thought has just arisen in my mind. Did you not observe her extreme excitement when I pre-

sented the lieutenant to her? It was, perhaps, the first sight?"

"Your highness's suspicions go too far. Her highness had just come from the chapel in that melancholy humour."

"This spirit of excessive devotion will ruin her. Dean Adrian has possession of her conscience. I had hoped that death would have relieved her of this gloomy tormentor, but he has as many lives as a cat, and a tenacious sincerity into the bargain; for he never replied to a letter which I sent him when supposed to be lying on his death-bed, and in which I intreated him, in the most solemn manner, at last to break his silence, and to inform me what part he had taken in the disappearance of Lafare, and where the unhappy girl was concealed."

"In my opinion, neither his reverence the dean, nor her highness the margravine, has any knowledge at all on the subject," replied Dandowich.

"Nor, by Heaven!" exclaimed the prince,—a tear of burning passion starting to his eye,—"I know of only one person on earth, disposed and willing to do that angel an injury: and, by all that is sacred, I will compel her to confess."

The prince's features quickly lost their enraged expression, and, assuming an appearance of softened melancholy, he said, "Why am I doomed to a state of such wretchedness? Why destined to be a prince? How much happier is Isidor! His heart is at liberty to choose and love whatever object it pleases; while I, at war with rapacious relations, hypocritical priests, and disturbed factions, am made a sacrifice to my connections, and

must sell my hand and freedom to a being I can never love!"

Rising up, the prince told Dandowich that he might now go;—but as he was about to obey, he was called back, and asked if he knew who the blue-eyed and beautiful girl was who walked on the left of the prince's mother?

Dandowich replied, that she was the newly-arrived addition to the court circle,—Helen Am Steig.

"She is a lovely creature, and has eyes as bright as heaven," continued the margrave, as if dwelling on some cherished recollection. "She is as slender as the neck of the stag, and also, it is said, as good as she is fair. By my troth, I have only seen one fairer than she! Good night, Dandowich."

The prince's valet then took his leave, laughing. While ascending the staircase, he hummed the following parody of one of Petrarch's verses:—

> "Dov' è la donna eletta?
> Lontano paese, turre oscura,
> Voi possedete, ed io piango 'l mio bene!"

Dandowich was vexed at not being able to find some papers in his pocket, which he had intended to fasten together, but which, as he now recollected, he had left with the steward. The impatience of the hot-tempered man was too great to allow him to be quiet; so he started once more to his legs to fetch back the forgotten papers in time. The porteress was on the point of fastening up the house for the night, and was much surprised at Dandowich's return.

"Whither so fast, master cashier?" inquired the old lady, with her lamp and great bunch of keys;—"the night is dark, and no friend to human kind; a storm is brewing, and I will lay a wager the ghost is about?"

"The ghost, mistress!—what ghost?"

"You pretend not to know, do you? Heaven save us! why he has wandered hereabout for years past, ever since the castle was quite finished and inhabited. I have often seen it, or rather them, (for there are two,) with my own eyes, when the black pair passed the hermitage from the wood, and no good ever happened when any one saw them."

"Two ghosts, did you say, mistress? I recollect to have heard something about them, but never had the fortune to meet with them."

"What a lucky creature you are! Well, you must know the late margrave is the principal ghost, and the other is a female, and, no doubt, the duchess that died here some years ago."

"At the winter-castle, you no doubt mean?"

"Aye, the same. They are the two; and I shudder yet to think on the first time I met them near the gamekeeper's house, on a moonlight night. The one was all in black, with a long black feather in his hat, and a staff of office in his hand; and the other—the lady—in a grey or brown cowl, just as she had lain in her coffin. You may believe me that I did not speak to them, and my very hair stood on end with the breeze from the grave that blew from them as they passed."

"It is really awful to think on't, good mistress; but the service of my master must put to flight all

fears of the ghosts. Let me pass out; — I shall come back in a few minutes."

The door was then opened, and Dandowich proceeded rapidly towards the castle, for the sultry atmosphere, as well as the story of the good porteress, made due impression upon one who, with his usual hypocrisy, represented himself as being more courageous, in regard to supernatural appearances, than he really was. He had hardly reached the lower parterre at the back of the castle, when the dismal idea in his brain threatened to assume an appearance of grave reality, — for, as it seemed to him, two figures made their appearance, coming out of the arbour not far off, which he only stared at for a moment, and then took to his heels for the castelry. His imagination immediately pictured the deceased margrave, with the long feather in his hat, and the grey penitent at his side.

While Dandowich, disgracefully enough, thus took to flight, the ghostly pair returned to the arbour, where the following conversation took place between them: —

"What man was that?"

"Dandowich."

"Do you know what sudden fit of fright seized him?"

"The dread of ghosts."

"Has the brave man such a failing?"

"You have seen with your own eyes. In the mean time, this terror, which I have learned is also shared by the guards and menials of the house, is extremely favourable for our plan."

"While accompanying you, and lost in conversation, I had forgotten that we are again in the

neighbourhood of men; — my forgetfulness might have betrayed us."

"There is no occasion to fear. The margravine, anxious for the safety of her dear son, has removed the guard from her own mansion, and placed it in the neighbourhood of the chapelry, as his highness does not want a guard at the gate of the house. This regulation has enabled me, alone and unobserved, to leave the castle at so late an hour, and to meet you at the place pointed out. What an opportunity now presents itself for the complete accomplishment of our views! He here, sleeping in the neighbourhood of destruction, in its very clutches, if it should so please us. At our appearance, all the guards, like yonder scoundrel, take to flight. This master-key, which I procured long ago, opens the shut door. The castellan trembles at every breath of wind; — go to him, and finish the adventure."

"It is the monstrous thought of an enraged woman!"

"Then you refuse? — you deny your assistance! You wish to draw back, and I, who bear him such a deadly hatred, — I am only a woman!"

"I feel my blood run cold in your presence. — Good night. I must commune with Heaven, and be determined by it. The finger of God has disarmed me; but, perhaps, he will communicate a fresh intimation of his will, — a renewed call!"

CHAPTER IV.

"Our own hearts are our most dangerous enemies."

The hour of eight had struck on the castle clock, when Helen, having been provided by her kind friend, Margaret, with a veil and shawl as a protection from the unpleasant haze of the morning, set out for the winter castle in the princess's coach, accompanied by a single attendant, seated behind. Although the country, through which she rapidly passed, was new to her, and clothed in a strange, murky hue, the fair traveller, deeply wrapt in her travelling attire, was more occupied with her own reflections than with the scenery around her.

"Farewell!" was Margaret's parting greeting; "farewell, my best and trustworthy friend! You leave me behind you in a prison of care, in which my only consolation is the recollection of your attachment. Think of me with equal affection; acquit yourself punctually of your commission, and return soon,—when the sky is clear!"

Helen pondered on the meaning of these words, on the emphasis with which they were uttered, and on the mysterious conclusion which followed them: —"Do not forget to listen for the psalm, and to

repeat the Lord's prayer when you cross the water in the garden of the castle: do this from love to me, and to console me!" This last request was added in a stifled voice; and when she bent to kiss her friend, the latter detected in Margaret's eyes something resembling a tear. This appearance of human feeling, in eyes formerly so dark and dull, deeply affected Helen, to whom Margaret appeared as one newly born. The rock, at last, had given signs of life.

Her affection to Helen seemed rather, in the opinion of the latter, as the wild emotion of an agitated bosom, which loves to spend its energies in the conflict of passion, than that romantic friendship which ever appears more delightful to the visionary mind than any common feeling. Helen had often trembled in the embraces of Margaret: they resembled the corporeal greetings of a being risen from the grave. She struggled against suspicions which, notwithstanding their short acquaintance, and although she was still ignorant of her secrets, had arisen in her mind to such a degree as almost to determine her to separate from this mysterious friend. It had not escaped Helen's observation, that Margaret was in the habit of going out late at night. On these occasions she had watched her from the window, and seen her cross the court and disappear among the trees of the park. She had heard her return after some time, shut her door with all possible precaution, and listen whether her neighbour was also asleep, who, at that moment, feigned to slumber. Helen, the next day, had always preserved the most profound silence on what she had seen during the night, although her heart eagerly

longed to arrive at the solution of such incomprehensible occurrences. Margaret was in the habit of speaking with the utmost contempt of the other sex, and of the love subsisting between man and wife. On those females, whom the report of the world accused of being exceedingly partial to the society of men, she had no mercy. Helen, therefore, could not prevail on herself to ascribe the nightly excursions of her friend to any unworthy cause:—her chaste and pure mind scarcely dreamt of impurity. Perplexed, however, and terrified, she could not banish the idea from her mind that Margaret concealed unlawful and dangerous secrets, and would render any one who clung to her miserable. But her tears at parting had removed every suspicion: and now, as the sun ascended higher, and dispelled the clouds that had darkened the heavens, Helen's mind also became more cheerful, and she gave herself up, without a check, to the impressions made upon her by surrounding objects.

The carriage had for some time been proceeding at a slower rate, as the road lay up a hill of considerable ascent, covered with the wild luxuriance of the yellow broom. Behind this was a lovely valley, irrigated by silvery streams, and studded with primitive villages. A ridge of wood-crowned romantic hills, whose summits were tinged with mingled hues of violet and blue, bounded the horizon in the distance. On the highest pinnacle of the hill, bent by time over the gaping abyss below, stood an image of our Lady, hung round with garlands, which had been placed there by well-intentioned simplicity, the piety of the happy-minded, or the

superstition of hypocrites. Before this image, with his back placed towards the coach, knelt a man, wrapt up in a large grey summer cloak; and Helen overheard the coachman say to the servant behind the coach, "See, Lewis, that is the pious man whose prayers restored the worthy Dean Adrian to life again."

Helen leaned out of the coach, and saw Leodegar rise from the ground, and, turning towards her, salute her respectfully, with hat in hand. His appearance this morning was to Helen as the fairest sunbeam, when the shades of night first disappear.

"Leodegar!" she exclaimed, with surprise, "are you here?—at an hour's distance from the castle of the princess! What brings you to this lonely hill?"

"The way of life," replied Leodegar, in whose countenance on this occasion there was an appearance of openness depictured,—an animation that diffused over his face the glow of mental excitement. "Her highness," he said, "had determined to send him on the morrow to the winter-castle; but as Jehu tarried with her, he thought it better to proceed forward to day."

"Jehu?" replied Helen, not comprehending him; making room for him at the same time, to take his seat with her in the coach. He said how rejoiced he was to continue his journey with her; and he immediately commenced the conversation:—"You transport a poor missioner to heaven," he said with a grave smile. "I am not flattering you; the thing is true; you are truly angelic and good."

At this unexpected address, Helen was struck dumb, with mingled feelings of pain and pleasure.

"I cannot," continued Leodegar, with increasing enthusiasm, "express to you the admiration with which your unpretending, and yet exalted virtues, have inspired me. Compared with the ordinary mortals with whom it is my lot to be associated, you are an angel!"

"Sir!" stammered Helen, in extreme confusion, and almost overpowered with the earnestness with which he spoke, and half regretting that she had offered the enthusiast a seat beside her.

Leodegar remarked her distress, and hastening to remove it, said mildly—"Fear not, I am neither an enemy nor a tempter. I myself am engaged in a contest with temptation, and your purity will encourage me in the struggle."

"I do not deserve your praises," Helen replied, on which he rejoined.

"Helen Am Steig, I have but spoken the truth! You are innocence, victorious over every conflict! Would that my mind were as pure, and my soul as guiltless as thine! Alas, for the weakness of human nature! It is a fearful conflict, which I am perpetually waging against the assaults of him, who has been well described as going about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. But, with the blessing of Heaven, I will yet come off victorious over my spiritual enemies: and O! how insignificant are the greatest triumphs ever achieved by the conquerors of the world, compared with the victory over a deceitful and desperately wicked heart! And weak, aye, as the reed before the blast, is man, unaided by his Creator, when assailed by the powers of darkness.

"But Heaven," continued the enthusiast, after

a pause, " works by human means, and you have been its instrument in arresting me in my headlong career. Would that it were permitted to me ever to enjoy the advantage of such a monitor as you would be to me; that the glorious example of your innocence and purity were ever before me! But, alas! I am not worthy of such holy companionship."

"Leodegar," replied Helen, not altogether without some alarm, at this somewhat wild rhapsody of the enthusiast, " you greatly overrate the merits of the being it is your pleasure to load with such encomiums. I am a weak, sinful mortal, like yourself, and need rather your prayers to Heaven on my behalf than these your extravagant praises of myself."

Regardless, however, of these admonitions, Leodegar continued in the same strain of panegyric, and said, " How soothing to me has been your presence. The tempter has long been busy with me, and with unceasing perseverance has urged me to the commission of a grievous and deadly sin—a sin at the very contemplation of which my soul now shudders, and but for your instrumentality, it had, perhaps, ere now been committed. Yes, I hail you as a messenger from that blessed region, of whose purity—if ever angelic attributes were veiled in a form of flesh—you partake."

"Cease," exclaimed Helen, becoming every moment more alarmed at the energy with which the enthusiast pursued the subject—" cease, I pray you. This language, applied to so humble a being as myself, is little else than mockery."

" Nay, Helen," rejoined the enthusiast, " Heaven is my witness—mockery was far from my thoughts.

O Helen—the word dies upon my lips—I have scarcely the courage to give utterance to the presumptuous thought: but could I—dared I hope that you would accept me as your companion through the wilderness of life—to encourage me by your example—to soothe me by your affection and your truth—"

"Leodegar," exclaimed Helen, scarcely crediting the unexpected declaration of the enthusiast—"do I hear aright? Is this the language of one who is vowed to the service of Heaven?"

"Helen," was the reply; "I have not yet taken the irrevocable vow."

"Is your opinion then unfavourable to the devotion of a life to the exclusive service of the altar?" inquired the maiden, in a tone of surprise which she could not repress.

"No, young lady," rejoined the enthusiast, eager to remove the impression he had unintentionally produced on her mind; "to be a servant of the altar is, indeed, an exalted lot. To stand there before the world, in the honoured garb of the priest of Heaven, is a station which kings might envy; and such is my reverence for the priesthood, that I am pledged to pursue, even to the death if it be necessary, those who would defile the temple and dishonour its servants."

"But wherefore," inquired Helen, "have you not taken the vow which would bind you for ever to the service of that church to whose interests you have devoted your energies and your talents?"

"Because," was the enthusiast's reply, "I do not feel myself worthy of the sacred office to which you would direct my aspirations. Nevertheless, in a humbler capacity, in the rank of Christian

soldiers, I may yet be useful in the great cause in which I have embarked."

"But," asked Helen, "if you deem yourself unworthy of the honour of being devoted by the sacred vow to the exclusive service of Heaven, how much more ought I to hesitate, ere I adopt a step which I have long been contemplating."

"What mean you?" inquired the enthusiast, with some perturbation in his manner.

"To take the veil," was the reply of the maiden.

"And what," asked the other, "has instigated you to such a resolution?"

"My misfortunes," answered Helen. "I am an orphan alone in the world, with no protector but my aunt, who has only the power of extending her patronage to me at this court, for the atmosphere of which I feel myself to be utterly unfit. If I abandon her protection, what other refuge have I but a convent?"

"The faithful and fond bosom of one who would cherish you as a tender and lovely flower," was the answer of the enthusiast. "O Helen! I feel that I ask a treasure for which princes might sue."

The enthusiast paused, as if he wanted the courage to be more explicit, when Helen replied:

"I will not affect to misunderstand you, nor will I disguise from you that you have excited in my bosom an interest which I never yet felt for any of your sex; and under more auspicious circumstances, I should not hesitate to plight you my troth; but wherefore seek a union, which, situated as we both are at present, could only add to the perplexity and hardness of our lot?"

The gloom on Leodegar's features betrayed the state of his mind, while he replied, "I bear no

name on earth: my condition imposes on me self-denial.—Pray for me, that I may fulfil my duty; that I may be strengthened to arm myself against the sweet witchery of your innocence,—as well as against thy dangerous beauty."

Here he suddenly became silent. A lively blush overspread his countenance;—his eyes glistened, and he seemed not to be aware that Helen's were fixed on the ground. After a silence of some time, during which she in vain attempted to dissipate her embarrassment, Leodegar continued, evidently much affected, "The advice which I am now about to give you, merits your deepest attention. You are in evil hands. In the house of Magdalene, Satan embraces a cherub. Have done with Eberstein, while it is yet time."

Helen started with terror.

"Satan seeks, by his connection with a cherub, to protect himself from guilt," continued Leodegar, more warmly; "and to be healed of his deadly malady in unsullied arms; but his poisoned breast cannot be relieved by inhaling even the breath of the holy. Angel!—free yourself from an impure being!"

"Whence is your knowledge?" inquired Helen, incoherently:—"what do you say? Explain."

"I cannot explain myself as clearly as a book, or as a witness before a judge, but only according to my impressions and anticipations. Thus I swear—they are the sacred truth. Are you ignorant of that secret bias of the heart, by which congenial spirits feel themselves united, as it were, at the first glance, as instantaneous as the lightning, that strikes its victim dead?"

Helen seemed all animation; and as Leodegar continued, she restrained her emotions with difficulty.

"Do you know the feeling," he said, "on the contrary, which, quick as the thunder-storm, and whether called by the name of hate or fear, repels us from another? This fear, this anguish, this hatred, I should say, has swelled my bosom since the moment I saw Margaret. I sometimes possess the power of looking into futurity; and at present this power is mine. Eberstein will be your ruin, if you do not leave her for ever."

Helen had scarcely recovered from the astonishment into which all this had thrown her, when the coach was heard rattling over the paved-way; the shock aroused her,—the horses, however, had to go down a steep descent to the gates of the castle. The driver passed quickly along, leaving behind him the balustrades of the bridge, and the graves that appeared on either side of the path-way. The inner court now displayed its capacious dimensions, and the eye rested on a cheerless prospect, wintry even in summer-time; the granite pavement overgrown with arid grass and yellow moss, presented a dreary surface; the stables and servants' rooms along the walls, appeared deserted and empty. The residence stood in the back ground of the court, and its antique appearance presented a perfect contrast to the summer residence, which was built in the agreeable style of the modern Italian; towers, with winding staircases, reared themselves on high; lofty chimneys, steep roofs, and tin-covered gables surmounted the building, which was ornamented with a hundred windows, and

many doors and gates; heavy iron balustrades enclosed the castle on both sides, and opened up a view into the garden, planted with trees and shrubs of various dimensions. From the bridge onwards, to the gloomy vaults, and from the dark and rusty grating of the cellars below; to the deserted stork's nest on the weather-beaten pinnacle of the tower above,—the whole presented a picture of cheerless loneliness and desolation.

A strange contrast to this dreary scene, was afforded by the sounds of a wild sort of unharmonious music that proceeded from the first story of the castle; at intervals, loud bursts of merriment were heard, mingled with the jingling of glasses, and numerous discharges of fire-arms from the balcony, accompanied with laughter. Helen had sunk down affrighted in a corner of the carriage, and Leodegar also remained silent from surprise. The coachman muttered something about "a devil of a noise," as the carriage rattled over the vaults of the court-yard, and the servant behind made the air ring with his "halloa!" All on a sudden the sounds in the castle ceased, and a noise was heard of people hurrying and running about, as if possessed,—keys rattled, heavy and quick steps ascended the dark stairs; figures were partly discernible in the light of the hall gates where Helen's eyes first rested, and from which a respectable-looking female, with a broad face and ordinary features, but a very extraordinary quantity of shewy clothes, and a heavy bunch of keys at her side, stept forth, and opened the carriage-door with every appearance of excessive embarrassment.

The margravine's lacquey, with a harsh voice and

puffed-out cheeks, then announced Helen as "her excellency the court lady of her highness the princess, on a most high mission on the part of her serene highness."

The housekeeper curtseyed most reverentially, stammered out, with the assistance of Helen, a vast quantity of words, which wanted nothing to recommend them but meaning.

"What is all this noise about?" inquired Helen.

The good woman becoming still more embarrassed, replied; "May Heaven and her most gracious highness forgive my transgression and error. I had no idea,—no knowledge whatever of your ladyship's coming here on the part of her highness; and as the marriage of my daughter was to be celebrated to-day—so I dared to venture to use the great room for our morning and evening luncheon."

Helen remarked seriously, "that the princess would be exceedingly offended at her room being selected as the scene of such revelry."

"I know it," replied the housekeeper, sobbing. "I shall be lost if your ladyship informs against me. I have disobeyed the most express commands of her serene highness; I have,—I have! unlucky as I am! and this marriage-feast will be my ruin."

Leodegar took his leave of Helen, thanking her for her kindness, and called on the chaplain of the castle, who was very old and decrepit, and whom he found tottering down stairs, but still merry from the effect of a glass of mellow old wine. While Leodegar was busy with his new acquaintance, Helen, accompanied by the sobbing housekeeper and a crowd of the curious guests, ascended to an upper part of the castle, the interior of which was

much more agreeable than the exterior. The prevailing style, however, was antiquated, and there was not much appearance of comfort; here and there stood gaping in the passages, some of the marriage party, of the lower classes of the townsfolks; and in the great room, that was standing open, and from which the remains of the feast were being most diligently removed, a troop of gaudily dressed folks had got crammed into a corner, consisting of many young females, with shining boddices and green-garlands,—many young men in green coats, with cutlasses by their side, and their hats and rifles in their hands. One of them, a tall robust man, with florid complexion, clear grey eyes and fair hair, had a large nosegay in his button-hole, and was pointed out as the bridegroom.

The housekeeper respectfully remarked in a tone full of contrition, that this young man was her son-in-law, and that his name was Steinsatz, the under forester, to which he added his confirmation by way of a rude sort of obeisance. Helen, without detaining herself long with him, asked for the bride, who had hid herself, quite abashed, behind the bride-maids, and only came forward on being repeatedly requested to do so. She was a diminutive, pale-looking figure, past the bloom of youth, and shy to an extreme degree.

"Why so frightened, girl?" inquired Helen, encouragingly? "Keep up your spirits; do not be down hearted, for perhaps her highness, on your account, may overlook this instance of disobedience to her commands."

"That would be very kind!" exclaimed the

housekeeper, suddenly brightening up, in which joyful feeling, also, the whole of the party had a share.

" If the servants will not chatter about it," continued Helen; I will undertake to conceal your thoughtlessness from her highness."

" I will be answerable for that!" replied the bride, " if your ladyship would allow me to invite those to the entertainment that left the house;— I can assure you of their secrecy."

" Very well," replied Helen: " but I will pledge myself to this only on one condition. I ventured to make this little journey without a waiting-maid, as the princess promised me that I should have your daughter, Mrs. Housekeeper, to attend me during my stay here. It is by no means my wish to disturb the feast, but ——"

" It shall be as her highness and your ladyship please," replied the housekeeper, " as is most due. If all had gone on well, the marriage would have taken place a week ago. My daughter, however, took it into her head, to delay the marriage, and I, as usual, yielding to it, we could only bring the matter to a bearing to-day. Her highness had even appointed the day, and I did not venture to inform her that it had been put off, hoping that all would go off quietly; but still your ladyship shall have no reason to complain. My daughter Verena shall attend you just as attentively as if she had been married a year ago. We cannot sufficiently thank you for your kindness, and I hope my son-in-law will be of the same opinion, as both our places depend on it. The marshal of the household is a stern man, and ——"

Helen interrupted her babbling, by requesting to be shown into another room, as that they were in was strongly impregnated with the fumes of wine, and the smell of gunpowder. The housekeeper then prepared to obey, and requested of Helen the honour to accompany her. The rest of the company remained behind, on receiving a hint from Helen to that effect.

"Show me the room with the purple leather tapestry, in the modern part of the castle," requested Helen.

The housekeeper started, and begged to know who had spoken to her about that room, for it could not be given to her. On Helen's requesting to know the reason, the housekeeper replied that without a personal order from the princess, that room could not be set apart for any one; that, besides, it was empty and uncomfortable, and only used as a closet, where her highness performed her devotions.

"Very well, Mrs. Wilfuls!" replied Helen, warmly, whose wish was thus favoured by accident: "I am expressly sent to fit up anew the princess's oratory, and must, therefore, insist on the room being opened, even although I have not brought a written order with me;—or are you really disposed to doubt my word?"

"With all respect for your ladyship's affirmation," said the housekeeper, shaking her head, "perhaps a mistake ——"

"Very well," replied Helen; "I must then see whether her highness will not give greater credit to me, and remove the scandal thus cast upon me,

by your doubting my veracity;—my carriage shall be got ready instantly."

The housekeeper turned pale, and begged, in a state of terror, for Heaven's sake, not to bring such a misfortune on her head. She was ready to believe, and act implicitly according to Helen's wishes:—to open the room immediately, and to arrange everything for its being fitted up. Helen, accordingly, followed her conductor to the modern part of the structure, on the north side. The stairs, passages, and rooms, were here in better order, and more comfortable than in the more ancient part of the building, but an air of desertion was also still more evident. At last the housekeeper reached the wished-for room; and opening the door somewhat hesitatingly, permitted Helen to enter. It was spacious, or rather, long and narrow, and lighted up by a range of windows, like a gallery. The tapestry was as Margaret had described it;—the furniture simple. A large bedstead stood in a recess in the wall. Not far from a small closet was the large fire-place, concealed by a heavy screen, on which was painted, in the fantastic taste of the owner of the house—a winged sand-glass, resting on a scythe. Helen's first attention was directed to this chimney, and her hand was unconsciously directed to that place in her breast, where she had concealed Margaret's letter. The second object that arrested her attention was a small flight of steps, opposite the range of windows, and appearing to lead into an adjoining room. To Helen's inquiry respecting it, the housekeeper, who was now all compliance, replied by

opening the door, which was of a more ancient construction than the room. To her astonishment, Helen here had a view of a lofty, quadrangular vault, the walls of which were covered with damp mould, and the floor composed of brick-work. The room, with the exception of a cupboard, or closet, was empty, and was lit up by a single window in the wall, which was six feet thick. In the top of the vault, several circular apertures were visible, covered over with an iron grating, but not admitting any light into the room;—beyond, all was darkness.

"This vault," remarked the housekeeper, who was watching Helen's scrutinizing glance, "is the second story of the light-house, as the thick, quadrangular tower is called, which is situated on the north side. It was originally intended as a place of safety for the valuables of the castle, in case of fire or robbery, and it has never been made use of for any other purpose. All sorts of stories are current about this tower; and my daughter, who knows them well, may, perhaps, one day relate them to you. I may just add that we pass into the former oratory of her highness by that small yellow door, but owing to the room being so dark and damp, she determined on exchanging it for the red-room."

The yellow door, accordingly, was unbolted, and Helen stood in her highness's monastic-looking apartment for private religious exercises. It was in the style of the hermitage — mean and small. The curtains of the altar, of the stools for the suppliant, the drapery of the figures, as large as life, of the Holy Family, and the Magdalene, who was again here, were all in the most deplorable state

from the damp, that had penetrated into every corner. Helen, who was fond of order, saw in a moment the necessity of rescuing these sacred objects, as well as the valuable health of the princess, who often lingered there, from the destruction with which they were threatened; and calling to mind the elegant cleanliness of her own conventual home, she anticipated to win some degree of praise for her new arrangement of the room that had been confided to her, when the princess should see it.

After Helen had given orders to the housekeeper to provide, from the stores of the castle, the necessary supplies of linen and clothes, she returned to the red room, and threw herself into a large arm chair, to enjoy some rest after the fatigues of her journey, and her examination of the castle. The housekeeper having gone away, with orders to return soon, Helen advanced towards the fireplace, but the screen was immoveable, being fastened by a lock. Such an obstacle vexed her exceedingly. She listened through the crevices of the screen, but every thing in the chimney was quiet. Not a sound was heard to disturb the stillness, and Helen returned again, from listening, to her chair, in a state of painful agitation. All the mysterious words of Margaret now recurred to her recollection; the strange commissions which she had given her; the remarks of Leodegar; the mysterious advice which he had impressed upon her. Before her easily excited fancy a thousand romantic pictures appeared and disappeared: and a look, which she directed by chance towards the vault that had been left open, and permitted a

view of the oratory that was likewise open, had almost made her afraid to remain alone in the apartment. She was about to rise up, and depart, when she heard the sound of footsteps, and Verena entered, with an attendant, to prepare some refreshment.

"My mother begs your ladyship will excuse her," observed Verena, in a tone scarcely audible, "but she will return in the afternoon with the articles wanted, which must partly be brought from town, a distance of about a mile, and with the procuring of which she will charge herself. In the mean time, she has the honour to send your ladyship some refreshments."

"The very thing I wanted," replied Helen, "although I am sorry that your mother has not favoured me with her company to dinner."

"May I have the honour to supply her place?" inquired Verena, modestly.

"Certainly, Verena; but a bride would be inconsolable if she were to be separated from her beloved the first day of marriage."

Verena shook her head, and replied, mournfully, that attention to her duties must take precedence of pleasure. "My dear Herbold has just gone off to a place eight miles distant, in order to capture a band of wood-stealers, of whom he has long been in pursuit. It is only a minute since he set off, and I am quite at your ladyship's pleasure."

"Poor Verena, I am really sorry for you!" exclaimed Helen, while she invited the bashful girl to sit down and partake of some refreshment. After repeated solicitations, she took her seat at

last on a corner of a stool, but refused to taste the food or the wine offered her by Helen, who remarked, while commiserating the condition of the young woman, condemned to have a husband who must always be ready at the call of his superior, and who never knew, when he went out, whether he might return safe and sound, — that Verena scarcely listened to her, but sat, as if on red-hot coals, with her eyes staring around, in an eager and apprehensive manner, while her colour underwent rapid changes.

"For all the misfortunes of your marriage-day," said Helen, smiling, and in a louder tone, "you have only yourself to blame, my dear little woman. If you had only consented to have had it celebrated eight days ago ——"

"Oh dear no!" exclaimed Verena, hastily; — "this day week was the fifteenth of the month, and God forbid that I should have been married on that day!"

"Not on the fifteenth? — why so?"

"It is a bad day," replied Verena, more seriously.

"Is it marked so in the calendar, or why ——"

"The fifteenth day of the month has often proved unlucky to me," replied Verena, quite calmly, — "I have no faith in it."

A loud blow was now heard in the vault. Helen, quite frightened, jumped up, and, on going thither, found that the passage of the air through the open window had flung to the heavy door of the oratory. She returned to her seat quieted, but Verena, immoveable from terror, stared at Helen with eyes like glowing coals.

"Well, Mistress Forest-Inspectress!" exclaimed Helen, with a forced laugh, and deeply affected at Verena's appearance, "you are hardly bold enough for one in your situation. What! are you frightened at a puff of wind?"

"Do not be offended with me," replied Verena, after she had looked around to see whether there was any other person in the room,—"I am naturally of a weak constitution, and it's a wonder that I have lived, for I was born almost without any signs of life. Every little matter, therefore, affects me as if I were really ill. Besides, I know the reports that have long circulated respecting this castle, and that are still afloat."

"Your mother has informed me," remarked Helen, with an air of curiosity; "I anticipate meeting here with a prodigious stock of amusement!—Take this glass of wine,—you really must, you little fearful creature! and then you will be better able to go on with your story."

Verena, who was now compelled to proceed, drank off the glass of wine, in spite of her former terrors, and, drawing her chair nearer to Helen, began, somewhat encouraged, as follows:—

"Your ladyship must know that many, many years ago, a great lake stood on the site of this castle, and filled the whole valley, and received all the forest-streams that now-a-days fall down from the rocks and meet in the river. A great lord, who was travelling in quest of adventures, far over the sea, from his own country, after he had crossed the ocean, sailed up a great river, on whose banks he saw beautiful mountains crowned with forests and fields of smiling verdure, and, more-

over, rich cities and happy villages. But all these hills and countries, cities and villages, pleased this lord in no wise, for he was young and difficult to please, and still was in hopes of finding paradise, such as it is described in Holy Writ; and so the farther he travelled, the more discontented he grew. At last, the stream brought him up to this valley, then a lake, as I have already said, through which the river ran, — and this lord would still have wandered on as a stranger, for here also he was not contented. But it happened that a beautiful water-rose, that swam on the surface of the lake, excited his desire to possess it, that he might adorn his bark with its blossoms. When, however, he had steered to that side where the rose was swimming, his skiff stood suddenly still, and would not move in spite of all his efforts with helm and sails. But the mystery was soon cleared up; — the water became disturbed, and a female, as smooth as glass, with a beautiful body like a serpent, and arms of wonderful whiteness, raised herself out of the sea, looked into the ship, stretched out her arms towards the count, and said, 'Come below with me, thou lovely stranger, where it is far lovelier than beneath the sun! I love thee, and will not leave thee, and my green-haired youths have already fast hold of thy ship, and will not let it go!'

"The lord was terrified, and struggled against the solicitations of the princess of the sea, and would not go down with her; for, all on a sudden, a wish came over him to see his native country, to which, till now, he had been indifferent. The water-lady flattered, and prayed, and then wept, until she had

well nigh melted his heart. She then became angry, and threatened; and at last disappeared in the lake in such a rage, that the count feared his little ship would be broken in pieces by the waves. This, however, did not take place; the bark remained immoveable; and the green-haired youths, who often peeped out of the water, grinning their teeth, held on by the keel unweariedly.

" Night came on, and then morning; and dews, and clouds, and rain, and sunshine, and winter's ice; and spring, that sets the earth at liberty again.

" But the count was not set free; and many suns and moons passed over his head, and by degrees shook his resolution. His provisions also were spent, and on the banks nodded the springing flowers, and the free birds flew about in the air; and not far from the ship, the river sped fast and murmured:—' If you had not wandered from my path into the sea, you would have been free like me;' and now he alone, the young lord, that longed to be free like the flowers, and the birds, and the river,—he alone was a captive. His firmness gave way. Of hunger he had no wish to die; and had as little desire to deprive himself of his youthful existence by his own hands; so he considered, at last, that it was better to live in freedom in the green-water castle, than to remain here a stone.

" He called the water-fairy, and the loving creature came, and took him with her joyfully to her beautiful castle. There he lived a long time. Afterwards, the count took a longing into his head to visit the upper ground; and in compliance with his

prayer, the water-lady built this tower, from which the count could see, afar off, both the stars and the seasons of the year. He then wished to have a garden round the tower; and the love-blinded wife granted it to him. Next, he wanted fields, and vineyards; and all his wishes were fulfilled. The water-queen went on lessening her lake, till it was dwindled down to a pool, which is still to be seen in the garden. When the cunning count had succeeded so far, and saw the river beyond the limits of the lake, he took advantage of a moonlight night, — one of the three which the water-nymphs are compelled to spend among their green-haired people, — to leave the tower at night, and push his skiff, that lay in the vault, with infinite trouble to the river's edge; took hold of the helm, and sailed chearily away. The grateful river bore him speedily onwards; and, before the third night had expired, the count had landed on his native isle, where he was shortly after married, and lived happily. The water-folk, however, had not given over their tricks. The count, on the occasion of a duck-hunt, having fallen unnoticed into a piece of water in his island, the sprite of that water, being an ally of the water-fairy, held him fast, deprived him of life, and sent him, by subterranean canals, to the pool that was still left of the water-queen's lake. Fragments of rock were thrown on his body, and the people fancy they see the gigantic form of the ancestor of this house in the stone figure now lying in that pool. The water-fairy, however, frequently haunts this tower, and bewails the faithlessness and the death of her beloved. Many persons, and I myself, have often heard, by day

and night, a song, as if proceeding from the summit of the tower, in a strain at once of tender lament and devotion, and resembling the holy melody of a psalm. That is the complaint of the inconsolable water-nymph; and she will continue her lamentation, it is said, till the last particle of the foundations of this tower have vanished from the earth."

Helen, on comparing the remarks of Eberstein and Verena with each other, fancied she detected a piece of trickery on the part of the latter. She turned the conversation, however, to some other subject, expressing her satisfaction at the same time with Verena's story.

"How well you express yourself, Mrs. Steinsatz," continued Helen. "You have told your story as well as it could be told to the margravine. I would lay a wager that you have already told it to her highness; and that the chaplain drew it up so well, and you have learnt it by heart.—Confess!"

"Begging your ladyship's pardon," replied Verena, without hesitation; "her highness has no desire to listen to such stories; and I myself am too contemptible to open my mouth before her highness. If I have learnt to express myself a little better than my school-fellows, I am entirely indebted to the kind attention of Mademoiselle Von Eberstein."

"Von Eberstein!" repeated Helen, eagerly; and remarking at the same time, that Verena concluded her remark with a sigh.

"Yes, my lady," continued Verena; "that excellent lady has always evinced a particular kindness for me, and has taken the trouble to instruct me in various matters. I was an ignorant girl, of about

sixteen years old, when Mademoiselle Von Eberstein came to the courtof the margravine. On her first coming to court, she was generally called the fair Saint of the Wood; because, in our chapel for pilgrims, there is a portrait of St. Sophia, of such extreme paleness and beauty as to suggest a resemblance between it and Margaret Eberstein. On one occasion, while standing by a spring, and gazing stupidly at her while passing, she advanced towards me, and said : 'What is it you are looking at, my dear?—you might be better employed than in gaping at me.' I turned as red as scarlet. She then took hold of my chin, encouragingly, and said:—'You are not quite so stupid as the other farm-girls. Come to me whenever you like; enter my service, and I will see whether any thing more agreeable can be found for you.'"

"Well—and what else did she say?"

"I then made an engagement with her, and remained with her. As often as she made a journey to the summer castle, I wept; and as often as she returned, I was happy. In this room—aye, in this room," she continued, overcome with her feelings, "here I have lived, eaten, studied, and slept!"

Verena here stood up, as if suddenly seized with a fit of melancholy, and Helen, gazing at her with astonishment, inquired what was the matter with her now; adding, that she was a capricious-tempered companion, and that if she, who had frequented the room so long, and with such pleasure, was afraid to enter it, what was to be expected of a stranger, who was unaccustomed to the place? "Come, come, let us take a turn in the garden; you shall be my companion. An hour passes

quicker in walking than in one's room. Tell me something more about Eberstein. As to the fairy hard by, we shall be silent."

The walk was agreeable to both parties, and Helen, as she crossed the threshold, felt how much more freely one breathes in the open air than in empty rooms. Her natural good sense instantly convinced her that Verena had only invented a story, either of her own accord, or at the command of her mother, to lull her suspicions asleep respecting some secret that existed relative to this castle; although, at the same time, her own feelings were too deeply convinced of the influence of supernatural powers on human affairs, to admit of her doubting the existence of the inconsolable water-nymph, a being that was so closely connected with the history of her parents, and also seemed to occupy a part in the history of her own life.

The merriment of the marriage party was now considerably abated. A servant handed Helen the heavy key of the garden door. This man and a few dogs were the only guardians of the house; the servants of the margravine had gone to the t[illegible]; the other men inhabitants had joined the expedition to catch the plunderers; the maid-servants chatted beneath the linden trees at the gate of the castle, and Verena's bride-maid had taken a walk on the hill. Helen and her conductress proceeded, as if deserted, through the court, to the massive and highly-ornamented lattice door that led to the grounds surrounding the castle. The extensive garden had not then been arranged in the style of Le Notre; it had quite the appearance of a natural park, through which a few paths had

been cut, in order to assist the forest-rangers in the performance of their duty, and to open up a passage for the game to pass to their fodder. The paths were not kept clean, the trees and hedges were uncut. The margravine, who took a pleasure in the wild luxuriance of nature, had forbidden all attempts at improvement; here and there a pathway might be traced, that, having been trodden for ages, afforded a more convenient passage, and into one of these the ladies entered, where they were surrounded by groups of tall trees, and by bushes that were peopled with numerous tribes of birds.

The green canopy of the trees prevented Helen at first from remarking that the sun was hidden beneath grey clouds, betokening, by their yellow and white edges, that a hail-storm was nigh. The uneasy fluttering of the feathered race awakened at first Verena's attention, who reminded Helen that it was time to return; and the latter, casting a hasty glance towards the heavens, exclaimed,—"The storm is not so near, so don't be frightened, Mistress Forester; let us rather proceed a little farther, that I may see the fabulous pool which once filled the whole valley."

"Should your ladyship command," replied Verena, trembling and perplexed, "but the way is still long. At the end of that row of ash trees you reach the bank of the pool."

"Quick, quick! I am not afraid of rain, but only of horrid spectres and wicked men."

Silently they proceeded along; Helen, with a light and cheerful step, and Verena as if her feet were made of lead. The end of the ash trees was

soon reached; a few steps to the right, and the wildly-secluded banks of the pool lay before them. It had the appearance of a darkened steel mirror, on which the grey clouds of heaven cast a dusky hue. Not a breeze or a wave ruffled the surface of the melancholy-looking water, which was surrounded by a thick border of reeds.

In the midst of the lake, or rather pool, fragments of rock were heaped up in wild confusion, and a gigantic stone figure of a head, resembling the human, with features of frightful aspect, and placed on huge massy shoulders, reared itself conspicuously above the rest. It was easy to fancy this to be one of the race of the Titans, struck down by the rocks of the hundred-handed,—a picture that was then beginning to be popular with the artists of that period, in their decorative etchings on the walls of wells and fountains. Helen's imagination, however, was not acquainted with mythological subjects, and the traditions of her native country respecting a fairy in the water, that looked out, with grinning features, on the detested race of men, filled her mind at this moment with a feeling of terror, that was still further heightened by the wild and solitary situation of the lake. At the same time, she recollected that Margaret had requested her to repeat the Lord's Prayer at this place, and her terror increased. At this moment, her fright was so great as to unfit her for discharging the pious request, and she looked at her companion with feelings of apprehension, lest her weakness should have been remarked by her. Poor Verena, however, was in a state of still greater alarm. She shook, as if in a fever—her eyes were

fixed on the pool, as if they would pierce through it—and as Helen's cold hand clasped hers, the frightened creature shook all over. As fast as they could speed, they both fled, breathless and silent from the spot, and found themselves in the red room, without being aware how quickly they had reached it, how thoroughly they were drenched by the rain, or that they had not exchanged a word by the way. Helen's first exclamation was of her state of fright and cold, and, she added, "colder than without, where the storm rages and the rain descends, this empty room appears to me. A blazing fire would do us good now, and do you get one lighted, Steinsatz."

Verena stared at Helen for some time, as if she had been bereft of her senses. She would have spoken, but her tongue refused its office, and she proceeded mechanically to execute her commission. From a drawer beneath the mirror, she slowly procured the key of the screen, and, as slowly opening the lock, she threw back the screen and bent down in the fire-place, for the purpose of collecting the ashes that might be in it. While engaged in this occupation, however, she fell down unperceived, with her head among the ashes, and before Helen could reach her, she rose up, and with a cry of terror sprung along on her knees, shaking the ashes from her hair with both hands, and uttering a hollow moan, seized hold of the arm-chair, in the cushion of which she buried her head, uttering a half-suppressed sob.

Helen, at this sight, stood as if changed into a statue—"Verena! she whispered gently, bending down to the poor girl—"What is the matter with

you? What sudden illness has come over you? Tell me if you will or can?"

Verena wept like a child, and pointing to her head, signified that all within was whirling round. In a broken sort of whisper, she added, that "it would soon pass over, but that she could not light the fire in that place: it seemed as if her heart would break, and her eyes danced in her head."

Helen flew to the window, and called a servant who was passing—"You must be put to bed," Helen said to the suffering girl, who, however, got up hastily and said, "For God's sake not! I must never be unwell on my marriage day! That were indeed, a bad omen! I am now quite well again; the giddiness is over, and I will take care that all is done as you wish." She then went out with the servant to bring wood and coals.

Helen's feelings, on occasion of this strangest occurrence that had ever befallen her, were by no means of a tranquillizing kind. Her ideas were in a state of perfect chaos. On a sudden, hark! It is the surprising sound! Can it be an Æolian harp, agitated by the breeze—the water-fairy singing her plaint—or is it the guardian angel of the house, singing a psalm to the praise of God, previous to leaving his blessing? Helen approached the chimney without delay, and heard the tones of a female voice singing a hymn in such a low key, as to be scarcely audible. "Hark!" she exclaimed, "it is Margaret's psalm!" Her next words were to reply by repeating "Sancta Mater," in as loud a tone as possible up the chimney. There was a pause, and then a faint scream from above—then again a pause, succeeded by the sound of fragments

of falling stones, and a small stone let down by a string to the bottom of the chimney. To snatch Margaret's letter from her bosom and attach it to this string was the work of a moment; steps were heard on the stair—a pull was given to the string, and it was out of sight instantaneously. Helen had scarcely left the fire-place, when Verena and the servant entered with the wood. The fire now blazed up cheerily and the servant went away, after having communicated the news that the carriage of the housekeeper was now seen coming home in the distance—"I am glad that my mother is returning to bear you company," said Verena, who was now fully recovered. "I am a poor timid creature, that sees hobgoblins and mischief in every corner. But at the pool it was really frightful—was it not, my lady? I confess to you that I thought I saw my poor Herbold lying in it, and feared the thieves might have done him some harm."

The alarm and weakness of Verena having subsided at last, Helen continued to comfort her, as well as she could, and advised her to take heart, and to trust in Heaven, that would not desert an innocent girl on her marriage day. Verena sighed heavily at these words. In the meantime, the housekeeper returned to wait on Helen, and brought her daughter the welcome intelligence that the woodstealers had been seized, not far from the town, and consequently the expedition having been rendered unnecessary, Steinsatz was now on his way home with his companions.

CHAPTER V.

"Hate easily follows love, and suspicion confidence."

THE ante-chamber of the margravine presented a less animated spectacle than usual, on the morning following the arrival of the reigning prince. The princess, having been exceedingly agitated by the proceedings of the previous night, had not enjoyed any refreshing rest till towards morning; and her son, although he had paid her an early visit, had commanded that his dear mother might, by no means, be disturbed on his account.

Soon after Helen's departure, Margaret took her place as maid of honor in waiting, and in expectation of the arrival of her mistress, was indulging undisturbedly her recollections and schemes, when the margrave made his appearance for the second time, and after hearing from an attendant, that his mother, the margravine, was still asleep, he signified to Margaret in a cold and commanding tone, that he wished to speak with her in an adjoining apartment. She heard him in silence, and placed herself opposite the margrave, without altering a muscle of her countenance. Having looked at her

for some moments with eyes glowing with passion, he commenced by saying, with suppressed emotion: "How could I ever have imagined that we should stand in the relation to each other we now do—I as a judge, and you as a criminal?"

"Does this refer to the past?" inquired Margaret coldly, but respectfully. "I had thought that we were on equal terms, and that when I had determined on bearing half the guilt, that I had done all that could be required of woman to do."

"You are right," replied the prince, in a bitter tone, and as if penetrated with an emotion of horror;—"with the past we have done in a fearful manner. God sees my heart; and I am conscious of no crime, except the weakness of suffering you to live, and to be at this court."

"Conquer this weakness, then," she replied, in a tone of defiance, and at the same time of indifference;—"it will only cost you a word. Speak, and be my judge! You have already done your worst:—finish what you have begun!"——

"Woman! woman!" he exclaimed warmly, but checked himself, that he might not excite attention, and continued thus:—"Heaven knows, that a dread of disgrace to myself, and the reflection, that I might inflict a deadly wound on the sensitive bosom of my mother, have alone prevented me from assuming the office of judge, although it was high time, and my own feelings prompted me to it. Perhaps, also, I have been restrained by a lingering feeling of tenderness towards you;—you, of whom I cannot speak in adequate terms. I will, however, do more than be silent,—I will

forget, — if you will only act truly by me for once!"

"You would be the most unnatural being upon earth, if you could ever forget what you were truly and strictly informed of by me," replied Margaret, hastily and gloomily. "So long as I was united to you by only one band,—although that one was detested and bewailed, — so long I told you the truth, although it might be of the most unpleasant kind. Now—our connection is dissolved, and you have only to look for my hatred."

"On your hatred! who stole from me the most precious treasure I ever possessed on earth," exclaimed the margrave, with stifled voice. "What avails to me my princedom, when I can no longer call mine the peerless queen of beauty and of love? What thief has robbed me of my jewel? Confess, Eberstein! you were the thief!"

"No," replied Eberstein, firmly and calmly.

"Confess!" continued the prince, as before;— "confess where you have concealed the unfortunate maiden; who had no other fault, but that she healed the wounds which your cruelty had inflicted!"

"Did I even know the place of her concealment," replied Margaret, "you must not expect to be told the truth any longer by me. I resolved to be revenged on you through life; and my purpose remains unchanged. You gave me hell;—I am not disposed, in return, to assist you in winning heaven!"

She then took her leave just as indifferently as she had come; and the servant, who was about to

announce that the princess was now awake, perceived no change in Margaret's features. The margrave was less master of his feelings; and the experience of his mother read them on his countenance, as he entered to breakfast with her.

"I had hoped, Erich," she said, "to give you a more joyful welcome. I could have wished to see you more cheerful, for I have much to say to you, and I cannot do this when I see you so gloomy."

The margrave pleaded serious business as an excuse, and begged his mother to ease his mind as to her own state of health, that seemed to be but indifferent.

The margravine affectionately replied, that she must own a concern for his welfare had affected her health, and that she regretted he had not yet informed her if the lady, whom her paternal love had selected for his bride, had received the sanction of his approbation.. She had hoped to have seen him yesterday, for the purpose of bringing his acquiescence in person—but was deceived."

The margrave was silent, and stood, as it were, gazing on vacancy.

The margravine continued, in the same tone,—"I said, it is my last wish (and one which, as your mother, I should gladly support with my authority) to see you united to the amiable Eugenia, whose rank, and beauty, and intellectual endowments, render her quite worthy to be united with our house. Hitherto, Erich, we have been constantly united. The loss which you sustained by the early death of your father, I have ever endeavoured to make up. I have been your adviser—your friend.

The stiff formality of our court was astonished at the affectionate intercourse that existed between mother and son. Etiquette never separated us. The cold formalities of conversation were never observed by us, and I could always treat you with the affectionate familiarity of infancy. For this once, continue to follow my advice, as you were wont to do. The reception of a bride from my hands will form the last act of the public life of your mother. Yield,—that the feelings of my heart may render my duty lighter, and accept Eugenia."

"My dear mother," replied the prince, "the respect with which I always receive your commands is universally known. Let me entreat, from your kindness, some delay on the occasion. I myself am young; and you, dearest mother, are still in the vigour of life, and are in no danger of being snatched away before I can receive your blessing on my union, should I even defer it for twenty years. I have no objection to Eugenia; but I will be free;—free from a foreign yoke,—free from my own fancies,—independent and powerful —before I decide upon marriage."

"Your marriage would disentangle you from the influence of your passions," replied the margravine, in an emphatic manner; "and your independence and power will be confirmed by an heir to your estates. Only then can you boast of your independence, that you are engaged in providing for your own house, and not for estranged and watchful relations."

"She means my uncle;" said the margrave to

himself; "but that avaricious wretch will be disappointed."

"O, my dear son, do not let the unsuspecting temper of youth deceive you? It would be difficult for any prince to reckon more enemies in his states than you do. In casting off what you call prejudices, you have also lost your peace of mind. What I foretold you as a warning, has come to pass. A contempt of religion does not pass unpunished, and your indifference to its observances is on the point of wholly alienating God's protection from you. Your misconduct sets the evil spirits at liberty, that would have otherwise constantly languished in the bonds imposed upon them by the holy one. I know that danger is impending over you, and that nothing can avert it but the prayers of the pious, and your own personal efforts."

"Do you know that?" inquired the prince, frowning; "tell me who the messengers are that informed you of this?"

The margravine shook her head in silence.

"So I am betrayed even in the house of my mother," continued the prince, with an expression of bitter mortification; "you refuse to confide to me a knowledge of the impending danger."

"Erich!" she replied, in an emphatic and grieved tone, and almost weeping; "I dare not; Heaven has told me:—I dare not proceed further; it would not be for your welfare!"

"Heaven has told you!" exclaimed the margrave, with an ironical smile; "then my cares are at an end, and I am contented. A believing mind

would yield to the advice of such a pious prophetess,—if she would only refuse to be guided by the malicious influence of her confessor!"

"I disdain to answer you," replied the margravine, turning away.

The margrave regretted that he had spoken so harshly, and endeavoured to conciliate her by grasping her hand with the tenderest emotion, and saying, with all the affection of which he was capable,—I will willingly, dear mother, believe your words, and attend to them! I will be more careful to know my enemies and to avoid them. I will attend the church more punctually, that I may not scandalize my subjects; preparations shall be made for my marriage, and I will send proposals to Eugenia's court, and in return for all this, I only ask a reply to one single question. What has become of Isaura? I entreat you, if ever you loved me, and are acquainted only in the slightest degree with the fate of that most unfortunate girl,—tell me, I entreat you, where is Isaura?"

Rising loftily from her seat, the margravine looked earnestly and displeasedly at her son, and replied to him as follows:—"You connect, with an approval of your marriage with Eugenia, a desire to know what has become of Isaura; as if this attachment, which I only became acquainted with by chance, had not already caused me sufficient grief and distress. And now,—at such a time,—to evince this contempt for me; to place the pure image of Eugenia, in connection with that of the frivolous Frenchwoman! Oh, that your father could now see you! How he would lament that his throne is filled by such a successor! It has ever

been my fear that you are not worthy to be a prince."

"And why?" replied the prince, his eyes sparkling with indignation. "Because, endowed with the feelings of man, I love? Because I bestow my heart and affections freely,—a right enjoyed by the meanest of my subjects!—Such severity does not become you, as a woman and a mother. Along with all these reproaches, does your heart really speak as it feels? In spite of rank and title, has your heart never been enchained by the universal passion?"

The margravine turned away, absorbed in thought. The mirror, however, before her betrayed her confusion, and it struck the margrave to the heart. He ceased speaking, and paced up and down the room a prey to conflicting emotions. He then said, with apparent composure; "We will no longer dispute on feelings and custom. My visit shall not leave painful impressions behind it in your heart. I entertain no contempt for you; I shall offer no opposition to your wishes; I shall espouse Eugenia,—but not before my mind has been set at rest as to the fate of the unfortunate Lafare. Her relations make loud lamentations respecting her, and demand her at my hands, while I am in a state of perfect uncertainty as to the cause of her sudden disappearance from your court. There is reason, also, to believe that I possess the power of unravelling this tangled web. I have now done, and beg you will allow me to take leave of you."

"Will you then quit me so soon," inquired the

margravine; "and take your departure, when you have scarce arrived?"

"I must return home for the purpose of setting out on my journey to the mines, the works of which go on but slowly, if the watchful eye of the master does not occasionally inspect them."

"If your duty calls you, I shall not oppose it," replied the princess; "but, my son, beware of your enemies! Your mines border on the territory of your uncle."

"No matter; I shall not enter his territory, and am prepared to guard against assassination in my own estates. For that, a quick eye is of more avail than troops of body guards;—my trusty Westemberg is ever with me. For M. de la Montée, my lieutenant, I have a request to make. He is employed to make an accurate survey of the course of the river, of its channels and banks, and to draw up a plan of it. I shall, therefore, leave him behind me, and hope you will permit him to make one of your court. He has been accustomed to the best society, and is also a brave soldier and skilful draughtsman, and will enliven your circle by the exuberance of his wit."

"Although," the margravine replied, "I have no wish to see natives of France, or of the Netherlands, at my court, unless when recommended to me,—in the present instance, to please you, I accede to your request, and wish, in *this* at least, to show my desire of gratifying you."

De la Montée, who was waiting in an adjoining room, was then requested to enter, that he might hear, from the mouth of the princess, the favour

conferred on him. While presenting his homage to the princess in the most respectful manner, and with all the propriety of expression he could command, which, on her part, was received with a kindness peculiar to her. The margrave seized that opportunity of watching them both in the most scrutinizing manner. The manner of his mother showed the most perfect self-command, but De la Montée betrayed a degree of eager curiosity in examining the features of the princess, — a certain confident self-possession, as if the present moment had been long expected by him, and a wish to be near the person of the princess, together with a suppressed impatience at having to endure the presence of so important a witness to their conversation.

The prince could no longer silently bear his newly-strengthened suspicion, and abruptly broke off the conversation by taking his leave. De la Montée politely retired, while the mother and son separated, after tenderly embracing each other. The prince, having joined De la Montée, who had withdrawn to the room where the retinue of the margrave were in waiting, bade him good bye, expressing, at the same time, a hope that he might hear every thing favourable of him on his return. De la Montée, having made his obeisances, accompanied the prince to the castle-gate, where horses were in readiness.

The prince flung himself into his saddle, and, riding off with his attendants at full gallop, disappeared, like lightning, in the romantic mazes of the forest.

De la Montée having nothing to do, and being

desirous of some amusement, paid a visit to the captain of the household guards, who had just dismissed his troop, after they had done the honours to their sovereign.

"Good morning, brother soldier!" was his first address to the captain, who, approaching him quickly, gave him a friendly, but somewhat distant greeting, and did not fail, in replying to him, to lay a particular stress on the word lieutenant, giving him that title with all due emphasis. De la Montée saluted him in similar style, and clapping him familiarly on the shoulder, said, with an air of protection; "You have a comfortable berth here, captain: with the exception of the troops of his holiness the pope, I'll be bound for it, that yours is the most peaceable garrison in Christendom."

"Perhaps so," replied the captain, coolly; "but I attained my rank by *merit*, and that is more than every one can say now-a-days."

"Merit!" repeated De la Montée, smiling; "have you ever smelt gunpowder, friend?"

The captain's visage was all on fire, and his widely-distended eyes breathed defiance. "Mr. Lieutenant!" he stuttered forth, surprised and enraged; but the reflection that a favourite of the reigning prince stood before him, silenced him, in spite of his excited feelings.

"Now, now, don't be angry!" continued De la Montée, smiling, and shaking him by the hand. "Can't you take a joke? As long as I stay here, we must club our jokes together, my friend. Come! where did you first draw your sword?—where did you *begin* to smell powder and shot?"

"In the Netherlands, under the hero Eugene. I it was, who, at Oudenarde, preserved the standard of the carabineers, the company to which I belong. The commander-in-chief complimented me before the whole army. Severe wounds prevented me from resuming active service, but I still keep at my post, in filling a place of honour at home."

"Who doubts it?" replied de la Montée, smiling. "It is a delight to see how your men go through their evolutions, most noble captain!—they could have acquired them only under such a chief as old Eulen. The Netherlands are especially one of the finest fields for experiments and manœuvres of all kinds, it is possible to imagine. What fine wide plains, and what clean villages for supplying us with good quarters!"

"Ha!" cried the captain, quite enraptured with his favourite theme, "one may see *you* have seen a little service there. Long life to Flanders, Brabant, and the United Provinces! Oh! that glorious beer!—those patient, strapping, broad-shouldered *fraus*, with their acres of charms!—that hard cheese and stout tobacco!—and all those precious things! Sir, that land would be a pretty well-watered paradise, if they would not speak so much French in it."

De la Montée replied, in his usual keen, ironical tone, "But you must doubtless forget all these celestial enjoyments, immured, as you are, in this stronghold. Sociality and love hide their diminished heads in widows' weeds, and the flavour of tobacco and grog is among the contraband articles,

eh? You have bid farewell to your old pleasures, and have nothing to do but go to sleep, eh?"

The captain responded with a heavy sigh, and mechanically resumed his official chair at the guard-house door. De la Montée, leaning on the back of it, ran on in the same strain :—" And this rare uniform—how stiff and tasteless, by G—d! What is all this cumbrous tinsel, these bobbins, scarfs, and girdle-buckles? Mercy on you! that heavy-horse equipment, with the heavier metal-loaded bandeleer, and those hugest of boots, must be very agreeable to you!"

On hearing this brazen-faced muster of absurdities, in the teeth of all etiquette, the good Hauptman's choler began to rise. Still the imperturbable Frenchman persevered.

" You are assuredly in the very prime of life, my friend, but this old-fashioned stuff makes you look like a rusty champion of the ring. I will endure this no longer,—and a man of your inches, too! it is bad—very bad; and I *will* try to bring about a revolution in your uniform, at least. And verily, friend, many a change of the kind will hap ere long, which poor purblind mortals little foresee. 'New times, and new cocks of the walk,' you know, my good fellow. But mark! I count upon your discretion, and your good will. Your awkward cut, and your services, will fare all the better for it."

The soldier fixed his eyes upon the new military prophet with an inquiring look. like a man whose whole fate depends upon something about to happen, but he had not a word at his command.

Meantime Dandowich, conversing aloud with the equerry, was seen coming down the steps of the peristyle.—"Yes," said he, "you high-born gentry have only one to please—to take care of the state coach of her highness the princess. The margravine is content to go alone, with only one, at least, of her maids of honour, to visit her winter castle; refusing to be escorted except by two out-riders, without other followers. To-morrow, at six o'clock, it is her serene highness's wish to set out."

"All well," replied the equerry, "it shall be cared for. But what can be the matter at the old castle, that her grace should bethink her of paying it a visit in the middle of summer? I have made it a most particular point of duty, and taken the utmost pains, to make that castle pleasant to me, in order the better to comply with the taste of our sovereign mistress; but, spite of all, my virtue wears out in the trial, and I have hardly patience to linger through the day."

"Right!" cried the captain, "a perfect owl's nest; just built for ghost-pranks and robber-stories:—besides, it is close to the border-forest, the haunt of the most desperate rabble."

"Hey?" interrupted Dela Montée quickly, "were it possible the excellent margravine, unattended by her retinue, should run the least risk from the impious and disloyal vagrants, by Heavens! my masters, though you be tied down to your posts here, and forbidden to keep watch on your sovereign star, I am free as air, and will volunteer to preserve its brightness from speck or cloud, without being summoned to it as a duty."

Dandowich, with a look of surprise, replied, in a bitter tone, "Your excellency seems to forget that it is her highness's pleasure to travel without an escort of chevaliers, otherwise there would easily be found, in the noble gentlemen around, persons of tried loyalty and courage, who occupy a nearer place, and would hardly yield their claim to attend her serene highness."

"I entreat you to hold your tongue, Monsieur," interrupted De la Montée contemptuously, "and give me credit for knowing my own business. I obtrude not my services upon her serene highness, but I am at liberty to turn my horse's head whichsoever way I will, without concerning myself with the remarks of any valet de chambre, be it who it may."

Saying this, the young soldier turned upon his heel, and tripping down the steps, went to find the abode of the castellan. Dandowich followed him with his eye, speechless with astonishment, at the audacity with which the youngling had ventured to address *him*— the *factotum*—the influential lord the ante-chamber. The equerry laughed heartily as he withdrew, not a little delighted to see such a set-down of the great *factotum* of the court. The good Hauptman, meantime, not a little perplexed, was reviewing the hilt of his sword, and then consulting the chamberlain's face, which to him had long supplied the place of a weather-glass.

Another personage now appeared, to fill the post of the retired equerry and the gap in the conversation,—no less than the curate of the neighbouring village, an insignificant genius, who officiated, in the dean's absence, as father confessor at the castle.

To his ghostly office he added that of a physician—at once a curate of soul and body—for the very sufficient reason, that the margravine had taken a decided objection to the presence of the more legitimate faculty, insomuch that, instead of admitting its members into her palace, her highness would entrust herself, even in case of severe illness, to the care of the learned curate; who, if his temporal efforts happened to fail, had always the spiritual ready at hand to administer, whether it were the prescribed draught or extreme unction.

"Happy to meet your excellency," began the cashier, addressing the curate, not displeased to escape the recollection of the trimming he had just received from De la Montée, by commencing a new conversation. "Her serene highness was just on the point of despatching me, to learn whether Master Leodegar, that godly man, now your guest, had already set out for the winter schloss; or, if not, whether he be at present prepared to accompany her highness thither."

The curate confirmed the first of these points, and put in a few words more, to ascertain, as ingeniously as he could, the particular office which the pious Leodegar was sent thither to fulfil. But as Dandowich, with the air of an envoy, only shrugged his shoulders by way of reply, the disappointed curate said, with a most disapproving shake of the head—

"It is quite extraordinary how secretly and mysteriously all matters are apparently carried on at court. What intellect is equal to unriddle or to fathom them? This Leodegar is quite a new problem, and I verily believe he is only considered so

blessedly *good*, because my lord dean chose to recommend him. There is all that about him which leads one to think he must be a Rosicrucian, some damnable freemason, or bound in some unholy and devilish league—in short, that he is no other than an unclean spirit, concealed under the garb of religious zeal and charity. But, thanks be to God! that he is no longer my lodger; it was by no means pleasant."

"But tell me something more exact as to his extraction, and the arrival of this man here," said Dandowich inquisitively; "for I have never yet set eyes upon him."

The curate rubbed his forehead, and replied—"Hem! it would be difficult enough to say anything satisfactory, respecting what may be termed his '*curriculum vitæ*,'—the course of life he has pursued. Imprimis; what is certain is, if fame lieth not, that he came into our parts from the seminary at Lüttich, one of the theological students, but only with the small reputation of a novice. He had already, before leaving college, gun to manifest his design of putting aside all further religious honours and degrees; looking upon himself, in his enthusiastic fits, as one destined to be sent upon a mission;—a wise and holy man, born to travel the world in dust and humbleness of spirit; — to teach, to counsel, to help, and to heal. It so happened, that in walking with some of the students, an incident occurred which seemed to prove the power of his healing art. The one who was nearest to him was suddenly seized with spasms, and lay, to all appearance, a corpse. All the usual means to restore him failed. He

continued in the same state. It was then Leodegar fell upon his knees, by the bedside, and prayed to God, and all his saints, with his friend's hand clasped in his own. See — a miracle! in a few minutes the lifeless form began to breathe,— rose up well and animated. The youth told a tale of the wondrous things he had seen, both in paradise and the abodes of fire and brimstone, in which last he was detained until his friend Leodegar's intercessory prayers recalled, and released him from pain. There was now no want of patients, who sought out the young prayer-doctor, on many of whom his strange power took the desired effect; and when it was not attended with success in other cases, the blame was laid upon the want of faith in the obdurate patients. He also prophesied respecting matters which afterwards, of course, came to pass. He held prayer-meetings with the faithful, and inculcated the love of God, but in a more especial manner, veneration towards the servants of the church, ranking us poor spiritual teachers as angels of light, clothed in the garb of humanity, and invested with a princely dignity, of which he declared himself unworthy to assume the honours. Up to this time, all went on as he could wish; but the faculty of making the sick body whole proved more refractory; and when, at times, he discovered that it was not every cap and cowl, which deserved to be consecrated better than his own, he began to be held in less pleasant odour among his spiritual brethren. The archbishop, however, George Lewis, meantime, becoming his patron, helped him to keep his head

above water, till the young apostle, in one of his inspired moments, hit upon the idea of maintaining the doctrine that every prince, even when chosen and anointed of the lord, ought to be doomed to death, should he be tempted to sin against the holy altar, or against its humble ministers; and that every pious man is then bound to assist in accomplishing his destruction. This revolting maxim having been made known to the bishop, he ordered Leodegar to leave the district; and it being reported that the rector of the seminary was infusing the same doctrine into many of his pupils, he forthwith deprived him of his office. It was now Leodegar made his appearance in Germany; and at last, after a variety of wanderings, no one knows whither, he arrived at my residence, as if sprung out of the ground, with a high recommendation from our most worthy dean, on account of having freed him, by dint of prayer, from a most grievous disorder, of which the holy dean himself had well nigh died. How he came hither, we all know; but whether the good dean hath yet caught the spirit of light, is what I have yet to learn. With me Leodegar was dark and distant, having hardly exchanged ten words, though I was his host from the hour he entered my dwelling. He rambles about through wood and wild; and yesternight it was late enough ere he found his way back again. The sole property I have observed in his possession consists of a little book with an account of our Saviour's passion, an image of an *Ecce Homo*, and a sharp, well-polished knife. He carries a crucifix in his bosom; and what opinion to form from all this note of preparation, I would

rather leave to be unriddled by the wits of my respected hearers."

Dandowich had listened to the pastor with dark, wrinkled brow, his arms folded, and his eye fixed upon the ground. A short hem! or so! or eh! were the only ejaculations which escaped his lips; and when the speaker had concluded, he inquired with sly look and keen ironical tone:—"But how is it you cast so many imputations and suspicions upon a man who, I dare venture to assert, is thought worthy of her highness, the margravine's especial confidence and favour? Are you in a position to point out to us, the sources from which you drew those inferences you have just communicated?"

The good pastor, though a little baulked at the sharpness of the question, explained how he had derived his opinion from the letter of a friend, the name of whom he was ready to make known, and for whose veracity he would pledge himself.

At this Dandowich assumed a more conciliatory mien, as he replied: "If you are inclined to follow good advice, you will endeavour to ascertain the truth of the statements you have made, and keep a still tongue in your head. The time may probably come when those of highest rank, will be thankful for farther elucidation upon this curious subject. At present, God have you in his holy keeping; there is the poor lacquey Antony, lying grievously ill of a fever, and he would be grateful for a visit from you, pious sir!"

The pastor hastened to fulfil his duty, muttering, however, as he went, with the envious spite of a little mind: "I am astonished they should not

send for the prayer-doctor, Leodegar, instead of having recourse to the simple, spiritual remedies it is in my power to administer."

"He might not like to take your duty upon his shoulders," cried Dandowich, laughing as he retired; "but if the odd philosopher should take it into his head to assume the surplice, he will relieve you doubtless of the father-confessorship to her serene highness."

The curate doubled his pace at these unpleasant allusions, heartily praying they might prove no prophecy; and the captain now observed with a most important face:—

"Mr. Curate is in the right; all is in a strange mess here at court. Had I it my way at all, the day should not pass over ere I got hold of that black, crab-faced Leodegar, and fastened him, hand and foot, in the tower. What business has the rogue to carry that ill-boding, naked knife at his girdle, eh? A string of beads, and a woollen night cap, should be the only equipment of a wandering philosopher like him. An arrest, according to form, would be a rare morsel for me. Since I have been in her highness's service, I have never had any opportunities of showing my dexterity in this line. I would be as quick as a turn of your hand with these suspicious folk,—spite of his bare knife!"

It was with difficulty Dandowich could repress a laugh, but he replied with as much solemnity as the captain himself: "Truly Herr Hauptman, there is no lack of suspicious-looking faces among us now. For example, what think you of the new lieutenant, M. de la Montée—is he to your mind?"

"The conceited coxcomb! with his puffy cheeks, windy words, and swaggering air, with nothing solid about him, but his well-lined paunch. He is not the sort of man I could like, sir; he is either a debauchee, or a mere braggart, and one who if he did not carry about him the title of sir, would get many a cuff on the ears.—Zounds! the fellow has no breeding. My worthy, blessed Rittermeister would never have put up with such insubordination, in the first fiddle of his company, even if he had served more than ten campaigns in Flanders."

The captain then proceeded, with no little heat, to reflect upon the haughty air assumed by the young officer, in criticising his uniform, and the mock tone in which he expressed himself. Dandowich was all attention, nodded his assent at the strictures of the sturdy soldier, and, when he had got within a few steps of the door, said, in a low tone: "Is there any correctness, sir captain, in the account, that you once left the Netherlands in order to keep an appointment of honour with an officer whom you had insulted?"

The captain stared at the inquirer with open mouth and eyes, but said nothing.

"The same base rumour," continued Dandowich, in the coolest manner. "Rumour, you know, which spares not the most immaculate, added also to the story,—that in the rencounter there was something not quite correct in regard to your making a little *too much preparation*, by means of which you succeeded in bringing down your adversary."

"Poh!" exclaimed the soldier, in a violent pas-

sion, that almost choked him; but Dandowich again resumed the offensive.

"Why so very violent, my friend? Right and law are alike on my side, you know, against the injurer; and the scoundrel is the only one who dares not trust himself to proclaim an injury with a weapon in his hand. I entertain, you see, a high opinion of you, sir; and, as a proof of it, I will confidentially acquaint you, that a certain illustrious personage counts upon your courage whenever it shall be necessary to check the overweening pride and flightiness of that De la Montée."

"How!—an illustrious person?"

"It is not difficult to guess. You, as an old official personage, must be well aware that there is many a one at court who appears to be greatly loved, and is in secret hated to the most deadly extreme. I need not add to this, that the discreet man, who lends the value of his arm when the favourable moment for action is come, never fails to reap a reward. The title of major, sir captain, would not, methinks, ill become your name."

Herr Hauptman simpered, and licked his lips as he turned his thoughts, with full animal zest, to the glorious mess-meetings, the feasts in private, and the freer swing altogether, from the acquisition of new military dignity.

"It runs in my head, too," pursued the indefatigable chamberlain, "that for some merely insignificant debts, you were at one time terribly persecuted. Was it a rumour?"

"Rumour," was the reply, "no, I owed four hundred dollars, every farthing!—I was just going to propose a scheme, and ask your opinion, by

which I should be enabled to pay off that villanous race of wretches called creditors! — aye, *donner and blitzen!*—interest and all!—and be a free man again!"

"Yes: it's all in a nutshell! I believe there are those who would be glad to take the whole upon themselves, without costing you a single farthing."

"Enough!" exclaimed the captain, interrupting the cashier.—"Go, and present my humble compliments to the illustrious personage, and inform her serene —— (I mean, whoever it may be,) that I am ready;—it is only to give command. I know what subordination is, and wash my hands of the rest. I should only like to be certain, whether I am to wring the neck of this French screech-owl, or merely to clip his wings."

"That will farther appear," observed Dandowich;—"moderate your zeal; — no foolish prank either, as regards the French officer, or the lord margrave. From me alone you will receive the proper directions how to proceed, and be prepared cheerfully to execute them; for there are reasons why you should continue upon good terms with me, no less than I with you."

They then took a friendly leave of one another: the captain, with the intention of taking his sword to be fresh ground; and the chamberlain, to report to his princely mistress that the pious Leodegar had already set out.

The margravine ordered the little chamberlain to attend her farther orders in the ante-room, and seated herself at a table to examine a number of open letters which lay spread before her. Yet she

did not long continue so occupied: falling into a deep reverie, she seemed lost to all external objects, and even began to utter her thoughts aloud.

"Leodegar already gone?" she asked herself, as if by stealth.—"Has the dread of my displeasure so speedily driven him from my presence?—or is it the desire to fulfil my wishes to the minutest letter, in order to conciliate me?"

The smile which now played over her before darkening features, made it evident that the idèa of the last of these suppositions proving correct, was by no means unpleasing. She now recalled, with perfect composure, the previous day's incident in the chapel; again felt the same shuddering thrill through her frame, though no new fears assailed her; and her spirit seemed to rejoice in the thought that she would not shrink from encountering terror of whatever kind.

"How he stood there!" she went on, repeating to herself;—"how like some herald, indeed, of Deity!—bright with heavenly flame!—a messenger of the propitiated Saviour! How he awed and terrified with his eye!—urged to despair with his threats!—and recalled and healed the perturbed soul with the words of heavenly peace! Assuredly the dean has only spoken the truth! Such a spirit is not meant for this world! Such fearful power, and so much conciliation, are the boast of no one who hath not received his origin from above!—into whom the breath of Heaven had not been infused! Were he one, of the common order, he dare not have ventured what he has done. Were he a common-place, accommodating character I could scorn, hate, and punish him! But to punish such a being

as he is,—who dare raise the hand to smite?—Yes! I believe in his mission;—I am grateful to Heaven for it;—and the regard which this wonderful being evinces for me, will, as I anticipate, prove the most solid prop of my house. Besides, he is to be dreaded!—at his fiat, I am assured, my son would cease to live!—and so fails our race! Oh! woe is me!—Oh that I could succeed in binding down his threatening power in the bands of friendship!—for ever bind! Would, at least, that I could win back my dear son to the paths of peace and virtue, ere retributive punishment fall upon his head! Leodegar alone;—for whom his own prophetic words best speak, and the word of Adrian, steadfast as the rock;—only he can arrest the dreaded calamity that hangs over us; and he will do it, if I observe silence,—if I permit only that he may serve me?"

The margravine now rose, and approaching the window, gazed wistfully on the spire of the chapel, and breathed forth, in so low a tone as scarcely to stain the glass; her fears of the subject stole uppermost in her imagination—"the strange and terrible wanderer!—whence came he! ah, spoke he not of affection—dared he not in mine ear to pour words of fearful import, and of zeal, which sounded too deeply all the depths of passion—of passion earthly and wild as the tempest in its mid career. Arm then thy soul with lofty, yet with gentle pride, Augusta. Let his young, unexperienced spirit learn to behold in thee only a friend whom to esteem, and thus in him shalt thou see the guardian angel both of thyself and of thy son!"

Thus deeply excited, the margravine unconsciously drew near the portrait of her lost sister,

fixed her eye upon it for a moment, and began to weep. "Such charms, also, to become the prey of a sad destiny!" she sighed bitterly; "yes, even she, the beautiful, the high-souled and the holy to mingle with common dust! Was the winding sheet all that was left to the sweet being, that presided over joy and love, and goodness,—all to the cold earth borne; and that yesterday, the sorrowful anniversary of which still darkens my soul,—the day when she expired in my arms,—even while I was offering up my prayers for the dear departed, that Leodegar, urged by the same passion which consumed her life, which once in holy bond blessed also mine, but when forbidden still shocks me to the soul;—what can it portend—so strange a coincidence of dark and sorrowful things?"

The margravine's eye turning from the portrait, now fell upon a mirror; its expression grew softer, and with it the words that ever and anon, broke in murmurs from her lips: "I must, I think, have been not unlike her," observed the princess: "such was the complexion of my cheek, and such the radiant clearness of the eye, which time gone attracted the muse of Germany and Italy alike. Their poets say of my charms as those of Andromache, next to the irresistible beauty of the bride of Paris. My consort, also, like Hector, full of bravery and worth, was like him extolled, for leaving me to devote himself to his country and his fame; but my boy was more fortunate than poor Astyanax, hurled headlong from the tower; yet, though he was spared, my consolation and my joy —I had lost much to weep for. The lost return not to us again, like the dead. Isidor is so far

like his father, the most devoted of all lovers." She folded her hands together sorrowfully; she became absorbed in thought, and borne away by the force of imagination, fixed her eye on what to her, appeared a new made grave—"Boncampo!" she softly sighed, "wert thou become to me, like thy image in my waking thoughts,—like thy presence in my slumbering hours!" But she tore herself resolutely from the vivid memories that haunted her—"hear it not, spirit of my lost consort;" she exclaimed with bitterness; "cast a veil over these images of joy for ever fled; alas, of faults — of — the spectral forms of which, yet pursue and torture me. What a chain of dark and fatal days since the first one of that carnival until the last of the sad anniversary of my loved sister's loss,—that on which Leodegar ——."

But with a heroine's courage she recalled her scattered thoughts, summoned all her confidence, and banished the idea of Leodegar, with scorn and detestation, from her mind. From the depths of her heart and soul, she repudiated the daring confessions he had made, but although she dreaded him, she reproached him not.

CHAPTER VI.

Chains are still chains, though made of purest gold,
But heaviest to bear those forged by sin.

"VERENA!" exclaimed the Lady of Eberstein, in a tone of surprise, as she suddenly met the young forest girl in one of the walks of the winter-schloss: "Verena!" may the Lord be good unto me—you here? What brought you to a place like this?

"Oh, my good lady," replied the pale girl, equally alarmed on her part, "I hardly know how it happened. Yesterday we were married;—why, good Herbold's cottage has been almost dismantled and pulled to pieces by the late storms, so that the housekeeper of the castle has had the humanity to give us shelter here till our own house be repaired."

"Hem! so!" said the court-dame, a little softened; "I wish you joy of your new condition, good Verena; and above all, the patience and simplicity of a poor lamb. If Heaven hath any good in store for thee, it will soon, however, make thee a widow."

"Merciful Father!" exclaimed the young wife, greatly shocked, and eager to make her escape from

the cruel, ironical language of one she held almost in terror.

But the Lady of Eberstein, detaching a string of pearls from her hair, threw it hastily round the neck of the humble bride: "There is thy marriage portion," she said haughtily; "yet, remember that as often as you cast your eye on these costly brilliants you keep a still tongue,—still as the grave, girl."

Verena, half ashamed and half delighted, kissed the hand, and even the robe of the ungracious giver; but, more impelled by fear than gratitude, she stammered out with difficulty: "How could you even imagine, my gracious lady?"

The lady replied by placing her finger good-naturedly upon her lips, and then inquired, "Where is the young maid of honour who arrived here yesterday?"

"In the garden, my gracious madam."

"Have you spoken to her?"

"I have attended upon her."

Eberstein fixed her eye upon the speaker with a long and piercing look, and, without a word, instantly bent her footsteps towards the garden. As she was going through the gates, Helen herself stood before her, with marks of surprise and confusion in her countenance, and scarcely able to accost her whom she met.

"Heaven help us, my poor girl!" said the lady, "are you thus terrified at the sight of a friend like me?" Then speaking a few words of encouragement, she seized Helen's hand with eagerness, and, as if some one had sought to deprive her of a precious treasure (jealous of her influence), she pressed the fearful maiden to her bosom, kissed

her forehead, her eyes and mouth, while Helen appeared half chilled to stone at the touch of her thin, cold lips.

"You here, Margaret,—Lady Eberstein, I mean," she murmured,—"and alone?"

"No, with the margravine, my love;—she wants also to see you. I come for you by her particular order. But first let me ask you a question;—have you done what you promised me?"

Helen almost gasped for breath; then cautiously drew forth a sheet of coarse paper, carefully folded, and put it into Lady Eberstein's hands. "I have conveyed your letter also to the unknown;—this is the answer to it, received this morning by the same means,—such, at least, I conjecture it to be."

The lady examined the letter, side by side, and each with the most minute attention, and turned towards Helen, laughingly, "Have you read it, my dear?"

"No, upon my word!" replied Helen, warmly and impressively;—"you may believe me, dear Lady Eberstein!—I would not utter an untruth. You see it has never been opened by me; but for the future, dear madam, do excuse me from performing any similar office;—I cannot, indeed I cannot, become a party to any secrets; and I can truly aver, that since I undertook to obey your wishes in this matter, I have lost much of the peace of mind which I before enjoyed."

"That I can well believe," replied the lady, with lowering brow, and an eye that seemed to penetrate her very soul. She repressed, however, the bitter words which rose to her lips, and, in a

short, sharp tone, observed only, "Follow me now, child; the poor margravine must be quite impatient before this."

Helen obeyed, and felt her *soi disante* friend's hand tremble as she withdrew it with impetuous emotion, and led the way. Her own heart trembled yet more, and her anxiety and confusion became painful in the extreme, as she entered the presence of the margravine. She was pacing the room with quick, impatient step; her brow was dark and threatening, and she was on the point of breaking forth into bitter invectives against the porteress of the castle. She seemed to check herself, however, on being aware of Helen's presence, assumed a milder aspect, and received the homage of her young charge with apparent kindness of manner.

"Perhaps," she observed, "I ought to have received you with reproaches, Mademoiselle Am Steig, since I find you have misinterpreted my directions, and sought my oratory in a part of the castle where I had not directed you. However, as I believe you have transferred it to a more convenient spot, I shall there visit the altar, though you must recollect that I spoke to you, not respecting its new situation, but simply as to its new decoration."

Helen murmured out some words in mitigation of her error, which the margravine received in good part, bidding her to attend herthrough the sleeping-rooms, and the red chamber, with the fresh decorations of which she expressed herself fully satisfied, and even pleased.

"You have taste, young woman, I perceive,"

she observed, in a more confidential tone. "It is evident, dear, that you have been brought up in a cloister; but, what is still better, it seems you have courage, as I understand that you passed the night in this apartment, spite of the terrible stories concerning the neighbouring tower."

"One of the domestics of the castle, please your highness," replied Helen, "slept near me in the same room."

"And you neither saw nor heard any thing," replied the margravine, in a perfectly easy tone, "that I will answer for."

"Nothing in the world," returned her young protegée, with perfect simplicity.

The margravine looked gratified, and, kissing her tenderly, observed, "May Heaven confirm you in this innocent confidence and courage, and preserve in you the heart of a child, for of such is the kingdom of heaven. Continue thus obedient to its dictates, and you need apprehend no danger by day or by night;—darkness to such is even as the mid-day sun. Stay here, and discharge your duties, my love, our good Lady Eberstein shall join you. She would not be at peace till I had given my consent to permit her to be our companion in these quiet retreats, though my first choice had fallen upon Lady Werdenberg. You seem to have breathed life into a statue, since you became the favourite of Eberstein. Verena, too, shall continue to give you her assistance here. Be neat and industrious, and do not fear to perform your little duties, when you see me engaged in so many weightier and important ones."

With these expressions of cold, haughty friend-

liness, the princess retired, little imagining that the poor girl's bosom beat with more intense anxiety than even her own. That of the princess, indeed, was torn by conflicting fears and emotions, which effectually banished all peace of mind, for she was preparing for another interview with the dreaded Leodegar. She found him, indeed, already waiting her arrival in the ante-chamber. This she had not expected ; and as the young enthusiast bowed, and prepared to address her, the princess turned away, endeavouring to subdue the indignant feelings which rose in her bosom, at the idea of his having presented himself at the castle.

At length, turning towards him, with a dignified and forbidding air, she said, in a sharp, firm tone, " I should have imagined, sir, that, for very shame, you would have been more ready to avoid than to seek my presence,—and alone, to appear at this castle,—without having received any invitation. I conceived that your own consciousness of wrong must have inflicted sufficient punishment upon you for the want of due respect shown to me in the chapel ; and I now command you, should that be forgiven, never more to venture an allusion to such a subject, upon pain of forfeiting my favour and protection. Be it your duty to follow in my train, as a pious servitor should attend his patron, and whose constant endeavours ought to be, to aim, in every respect, at fulfilling the will and wishes of his employer. Discretion, secrecy, and obedience, united to the respect due to princes, are the qualifications which I require in you. Follow me !"

Leodegar, without hazarding a single word, evinced, by his marked expression of humility

and sorrow, passive obedience to his patroness's commands. He followed whither she led, up long winding stairs and passages, through doors, which were on the instant refastened by the porteress behind them; and still ascending, Leodegar remarked that they approached the highest apartment of the tower. After some intricate turnings, they stopped at a narrow door, which immediately led to a small room under the roof of the tower. This was not incommodious, but admitted the light only through a narrow grated window, placed so as to be with difficulty approached by the occupant of this secluded spot. Even then he must make use of the stool and table to get a glimpse of day; these, with a small sofa-bed in a corner, being nearly the only furniture of this little prison. On entering, the margravine drew aside the curtains; and there appeared, reposing on her snow-white pillow, the face of a lovely woman, — the delicacy and sweetness of which, contrasted strangely with the wretched character of the place. She raised her head,—beautifully formed, her dark-flowing tresses gave fresh lustre to her glowing cheeks and fair sparkling eyes, as she fixed them, with a reproachful look, upon the intruder. Stationed at the entrance, Leodegar stood with his looks rivetted with astonishment upon the scene, as if doubting the evidence of his senses. The porteress waited the princess's commands, while the latter approached the captive lady with a kind manner, free from all *hauteur*, but her salutation was not returned. She only fixed her eye more intently upon the speaker, but replied not a word.

"I expected to find you ill," continued the margravine, mildly; "the porteress assured me that such was the fact;—yet the glow of health is upon your cheek, and I am glad to see you appear so well. Doubtless it must increase your desire to breathe the air of liberty, and soften that strange obstinacy, which is the sole obstacle to it. Have you now become more reasonable? Will you, at length, fully renounce the claim you have set up, and permit my natural clemency to take the place of harshness?"

The prisoner, with a bitter smile, replied, with equal coldness and composure,—"Your natural clemency, most gracious madam, has condemned me to suffer a captivity like this. I feel an assurance, that your visit now is intended as a prelude to my death. Is that man at the door the confessor, whom your natural clemency has admitted, in order to prepare me to die?"

"Lafare!" exclaimed the margravine, in an agitated voice, "have I deserved this at your hands? Have you ceased to remember the many benefactions which I conferred on you at my court? And how have you repaid me?—by the most crying ingratitude,—by the seduction of my son!"

"Madam!" replied Lafare,—the lovely lady half transported with passion, as she raised her head with an air of scorn: "our intercourse was pure as is the light of the blessed sun;—that I can answer to my God, by all that is good and holy. My honour was my chiefest treasure,—valued far above any princely price;—for if a woman estimate herself highly enough to aspire to royal dig-

nity and state, she will not begin by divesting herself of all title to honour and self-respect."

The margravine, with a gesture of impatience, clasped her hands, equally provoked and surprised; but she was still silent.

"Yes, gracious princess," continued the captive, "I avow it;—I, the heiress of a great and noble house, dared to aim at the station often occupied by less high-born women,—that, I mean, of aspiring to place myself, as a princess, by the side of your son, in the face of Heaven, openly before the world. This frankness is my great crime; yet is it a nobler quality, princess, than the hypocrisy you have displayed. I do you justice,—you make yourself appear worse than you are; and for this you have my pity. You hold yourself forth as a systematic oppressor,—a tyrant,—while, in truth, you are but the petty governess,—the jailor rather of your son. You wish to persuade, that it is only maternal affection which compels you to act thus cruelly by me, in order to terrify me into a renunciation of my just rights; while, in truth, it is your son, who, faithless and an ingrate, as you state, wishes to be freed from your chains, and yet to preserve the mask of love. Oh, base conspiracy! interested object! I see it all, your highness, clearly. Yet I can feel for the situation you are in: I would not exchange with you: I pity, but I fear you not."

"What levity, what rashness, what madness is this, you abandoned French woman!" cried the margravine, transported beyond all bounds;—"you abuse my long-suffering, charity, and goodness. You, mademoiselle! the mere heiress of

a Lorraine noble! to entertain these high-flying projects! The bride, truly, of my son,—a margravine of the empire! Oh, shame!—oh, scandal of princely blood! Ere I consent to such a stain——"

"Then you can assassinate me at your son's command; is that the alternative?" inquired the dauntless, but unhappy lady; "what manœuvres to accomplish a single girl's destruction. Why condemned to the darkness and solitude of a prison? Why not bring me forth to the public eye,—condemn me before the people, at the edict of an unrighteous prince! But that prince trembles at the voice of the people,—at the outcry of insulted Europe."

"Isaura!" said the margravine, after a pause, struggling to control her feelings; "do not thus delude yourself. That of unrighteous conduct, is the last reproach which I should think of applying, or suffer to be applied to my misguided son. Unhappy one! he rejects your compassion. He——, ah! there lies all my grief. How is it you can believe that I should hate you? Would I not rather permit you to retire to your native province, there to forget the follies of which you have been the victim?"

"To my native soil?" exclaimed the beautiful Isaura, with a triumphant laugh; "your highness must know that my brother would speedily revenge the weakness,—the wrongs of his sister. The house of Lafare, madam, have never feared to meet an enemy,—though he were a king upon his throne. The Lafares are your equal in rank; I am,—you make me say it,—myself a marchioness of gentle

and of princely blood. Land and people, wealth and tinsel, establish no distinction, nor would they deter my brother's sword from pursuing your son, if to avenge a sister's fame. That he well knows: it is therefore that I am hated,—cut off from the sympathy of mankind,—from my dear family,—condemned without crime as without trial, most unjustly and mercilessly to this sad, revolting lot;—all to conceal the meanness, the folly, the wickedness of a vile, corrupt aristocracy, a despicable prince, and an hypocritical, abandoned court."

The overwhelming pride and indignation of the margravine flashed fire from her eyes. She stood the picture of insulted royalty; and in a low, stern tone, and threatening gesture, she replied: "You forget who you are, and who I am. You speak the words of a maniac; think you, my son trembles to incur the revenge of an Italian marquess; no more than I. As regards that, I should not care to open your prison-door, and bid you sally forth for knights errant immediately."

"You may do it, madam; yet here would I remain. This little bastille system shall be seen openly. This hour,—this day,—should the select of your little land appear, to acquit, and to give me my liberty, here would I remain."

"You are run out of your wits, girl," retorted the margravine with bitter scorn; "you trample my intended mercy under foot. Not satisfied with exciting rebellion in my son's heart, when the welfare of his people required his union with an equal in blood;—not satisfied with sowing dissension between a mother and her son, you still dare, though in a well merited prison, and in utter solitude, to

heap disgrace upon disgrace, injury upon injury, grief upon grief on this hapless head. You challenge my power, yet meet only forbearance and indulgence on my part. Hear me! You possess a promise of marriage from my son; I know it well,—it is idle to deny it. Dandowich has convinced me of this. Give it into my hands, and you are permitted to rejoin your family, your friends, your country."

"I have not that promise of marriage now," replied the lady, calmly as before; "but that villain of a Dalmatian will one day pay the penalty of his despicable tricks, like other spies, with a halter; I have promised it him, and I will undertake that he does not escape it."

"I will have you searched again and again," said the margravine in an enraged voice: "you compel me to lay aside all delicacy and forbearance. I will not spare your feelings, you shall submit to be examined by whom I please."

"I have not,—indeed I have not any promise of marriage; your highness may believe me. Why then threaten a proceeding which I cannot,—will not tolerate, and live. This is, indeed, too much;" and for the first time her courage deserted her, and the hapless girl burst into tears.

The margravine gazed upon her with an air of triumph; she spoke not, but her looks betrayed what she felt. The captive looked up, and a flush of indignation suffused her countenance as she caught the expression of her oppressor's eye. Struggling with the bitterness of her grief, she summoned all her firmness as she thus resumed:—"It is vain to appeal; I see it, take my utter de-

fiance, madam, and scorn for scorn. You sent that vile Dandowich to ransack all my little property; but imagine not that any wretch shall touch even the hem of my ruffle. I will first suffer a thousand deaths. Think you I have swallowed the precious document,—or torn it into tatters,—burnt, or given it to the winds. I entreat you will make yourself easy upon this point, madam; the paper is in safe hands!—no, it is not lost; it exists a silent, yet trumpet-tongued witness for me, to the shame and confusion of your haughty self and son."

"Lafare! only a demon can inspire such language," cried the princess, driven almost to frenzy; "what can have caused this strange infatuation! I know you to be vain, haughty, full of levity and flightiness; but I never thought you base and abandoned ——."

"Madam!" interrupted the prisoner, with a fervour she could not repress; "base treatment can never produce good fruit, but only of its own kind. Although placed in this tower, as near to Heaven as possible, no angel hath descended to commune with me, while I continue in the power of the wicked." With these words the captive lady turned away from the margravine, and in a gentle and plaintive voice, began to sing a hymn.

The princess rushed indignantly to the door, where she found Leodegar, whom, in the warmth of the previous conversation, she seemed wholly to have forgotten. She approached him, and in a quick low tone, observed: "Heaven has made you witness to a scene which thus flagrantly exposes

our family secrets; but rely upon the devotion you have evinced to my service, conjuring you to try the efficacy of prayer and persuasion, with which God has so richly endowed you, upon the mind of that unfortunate creature. Awaken her conscience, appeal to her fears, rouse her to a sense of duty; and count upon my gratitude in case of success. Wring from her the renunciation I want, and you will rid me of a load of anxiety greater than I can express. I leave you with her alone."

"What would I not do," answered Leodegar, with humility, "to obey your sovereign commands? —rely upon me!" Saying which, he approached the captive, and the princess hastily departed.

Isaura, not being aware of his presence, started back, and uttered a scream.—"Is this your respect for the unfortunate?" she exclaimed.—"Are you a clergyman? for, if so, you would request admittance,—not intrude forcibly into my apartment.—Come you to prepare me for the worst?"

The lovely inquirer was seated at a little table, neatly and elegantly dressed; the curtains of her couch were closely drawn; and every thing around her was in exact order. She was perusing some letters,—the tears starting into her eyes,—and when she perceived the embarrassment of the supposed priest, who was about to retire, she pointed, with a kind and courteous air, to a chair, and bade him be seated. He did as she desired; and, on drawing nearer, noticed that she was weeping. He expressed his sympathy, and seemed really affected.

"Alas! sir," answered the poor lady, "my situation calls for more than human patience! I am young,—I have hoped,—have loved,—and all I

held dear faded from before my eyes, like a dream!"

"Submission, lady, would quickly restore you to peace, to the joys of liberty and home!"

"Submission, good sir!—never!—never! The sight of my oppressor closes my heart; and I become hard,—fierce,—nay, desperate, in spite of nature that gave me feelings and affections the most sensitive! This margravine,—her son;—know you what barbarians they are?"

"Consider, madam, the maternal solicitude of the one; and do not misinterpret the motives of the other."

"Herr Abbé," replied Isaura, firmly, "I know that they betray!—they make me their victim!—Yes; it will be made known! But," she added, in an agonized tone, "it will be too late!—so soon and secretly will they obliterate all traces of my existence from the earth. Murder stalks through courts and palaces unquestioned and unappalled!"

"For the love of God, lady! banish such thoughts from your mind! The margravine entertains no intentions of the kind; she would not do you the least injury,—much less force you!"

Isaura fixed her eye upon him, as if seeking reassurance from his words. She then observed:—

"You seem to be a good man, sir; but you are, perhaps, ignorant of the design they have in view. Had my enemy not intended to deprive me of my life, she would not have permitted this interview. It is part of her character to permit me a confessor, as a kind of hypocritical charity, ere she deal the final blow!"

"You will live, gentle lady!—live happily, if

you so please. I am not the messenger of death; —most frequently I come to mitigate its terrors."

Isaura fixed her eye upon him as he continued: —"Your brother, lady, would confirm what I have said."

"My brother!—how!—do you know him?"

"He was well known to me. At my earnest prayer, it pleased Heaven to restore him to life, when he lay without sense or motion, apparently in the agonies of death."

Isaura uttered an exclamation of surprise:—"Is it possible!—you, who saved him? Then you are that holy and heaven-gifted Leodegar, of whom he has a thousand times written and spoken in terms of grateful delight! Accept, also, thou man of God, my warmest thanks! Oh, joy!—I should hold a jubilee of delight, to mark the happiness which you are destined to confer upon me! I no longer fear, since the saviour of my brother hath found access to his captive sister! You will never permit that I should fall a sacrifice—that—"

"Build not your faith on man, but upon God;—he never deserts his chosen people."

"Know you aught of the recent life of my brother?" inquired Isaura, in the excess of her joy;—"that he has obtained a benefice ——?"

"I know it."

"And that shortly afterwards my elder brother, René, having died, my father procured for the other a dispensation from his vows, to support the rank of the eldest born?"

"With this, also, am I acquainted."

"Indeed! And that he then embraced the profession of arms; that, moreover, he went upon a

crusade against the infidels at the desire of the pope,—embarking as a volunteer in a Maltese vessel?"

"It is not new to me."

"Doubtless, ere this," continued the overjoyed girl, "he is returned victorious to the home of his fathers; and woe to the margrave and his mother, when he shall learn in what manner they have dared to treat a sister of his! He, the avenger of my honour and my wrongs, will strike them like the thunderbolt!—His hand alone can deal out justice on the head of the tyrannic princess! No longer smarting under her hand, or trembling before her throne, I shall hear her humbly acknowledge her faults, and sue to us for forgiveness!"

"Alas! poor lady," began Leodegar, in a solemn tone, and with troubled look; "how shall I break tidings to you which must be known, though they hurl you from the pinnacle of your hope and your ambition! Alas! that dear brother's hand is still and cold! His lifeless body was borne more than a month ago, to the house of his fathers! He was slain near Candia, by the captain of a Tunis vessel, at the moment when he was about to become master of the galley."

The captive lady uttered one piercing cry, as she sprung from her seat, and then fell lifeless at Leodegar's feet. He did all in his power to restore her to herself, and she at length awoke from her swoon, shedding a torrent of tears. In a calm and gentle voice, he sought to console her.—"Grieve not, but rather pray for that dear brother's soul; and while you lament the brave and the beautiful,—the martyr to his religion and his country,—reflect also

that you are now the last hope and prop of your house; that your parents look to you for consolation and support under their sorrows; and that a solemn renunciation of one ambitious dream will restore you instantly to their arms,—that you will receive the blessing of a fond, forgiving mother,—become the joy of an aged father's heart,—and be freed from an unhappy compact with a licentious prince, who would never have rendered himself worthy of your love."

With these words Leodegar left the heart-broken and weeping captive, and followed Verena, who, all pale and trembling, had been sent to the lady's prison-house, in order to inspect the closing of the different doors.

"The good lady of Eberstein, my learned sir, is eager to see you as soon as possible;" she observed when they had reached the last step in their descent; "shall I inform her that you are here?"

"You may," replied Leodegar, "but I am bound first to wait upon her highness, the margravine," and he hastened towards the ante-room. Upon entering her apartment, he saw her standing at the window, lost in thought, and gazing unconsciously on the court below; as she approached him, he was greatly struck with the expression of melancholy which pervaded her features, and touched a responding chord in the bosom of the enthusiast himself. To her eager inquiry: "What tidings for me from that unhappy misguided girl?" he replied, with a strange expression of sadness in his voice,—"Good prospects, I trust, of atonement and submission, noble princess. I have—and Heaven inspired me with the thought—touched a chord in

the lady's bosom which will restore peace and harmony in the manner you wish. At the same time while I accomplish this object, I feel confident that your highness will be as willing to do that, on your part, which your heart must doubtless dictate."

"What, what?" asked the margravine quickly.

"And I think you will not delay it," continued Leodegar; "I mean, to give instant liberty to the Lady Isaura, in order, by this just measure, to conciliate the embittered feelings which oppose your views."

"That is what I have wished," replied the margravine; "my love of mercy long struggled against a proceeding which a regard for my son's honour and interest constrained me to adopt; but, since I began it, I am resolved to carry it through, cost what it may. Had I for mere whim deprived a person of freedom, I might well deserve the title of oppressor. Let that obstinate captive consent to surrender the documents, of which she bewitched my son, and swear never to see him more, and I will instantly liberate her, and restore her to her home and friends,—nay, she shall be compensated for what she has gone through, with store of wealth."

"And with what would your highness make compensation to the poorest wretch, who had suffered even a month's imprisonment?" inquired Leodegar, with an indignant glance—"Can the paltry coin of those in power pay for the long weary days, deprived of light and air, and sun, and weeping sleepless nights, spent by the innocent captive in his unknown and unheeded solitude. What! cannot that bosom, full as it is of gentleness and

affection, free itself from the common prejudices of wealth and rank? A saint in piety,—a penitent displaying the perfect virtue of humility,—can you, in your own palace be really in heart, the cold, harsh tyrant who condemns and destroys every one, and every thing, which oppose themselves to the enjoyment of her arbitrary wishes?"

"This language to me?" exclaimed the margravine, astonished at the daring tone in which he spoke.

"They are the words of thy good angel!" replied Leodegar, still more animated: "You made me your confidential counsellor; I must prove worthy of the trust, for I honour and esteem you. I am jealous of your pure fame. How delightful is it when the beautiful form of woman is animated by as beautiful a spirit! You have known what it is to love; and condemn not Isaura, who has erred in nothing beyond that. You also, have faults for which to atone; learn then to forgive others! Conceal not your son's dishonour by acts of tyranny; blot it out by the lustre of your own virtues. Contemplate the situation of Lady Isaura, and cease to be unjust. Think while there is yet time! think if God should this day call her troubled spirit to himself,—if her reason were to abandon her in the excess of her woe,—what a reproach would it fix on your memory. And to what infamy would not history consign your misguided and abandoned son!"

The margravine threw herself in an agony of grief and terror at the enthusiast's feet, while he continued in a more elevated tone: "It is now that you appear truly noble and worthy of command by the conquest of yourself. How I esteem you

for it! I will do more; I will save you from the temptations of your bad angel! But can you be the mother of such a son,—one who sins alike against Heaven and its holy ministers? Never, never! Thy heart is pure and thy soul bright as virgin innocence itself. What pure, yet powerful instinct is it which attracts me to you, and seems to link my thoughts, my feelings—my very fate with thine? Alas! I never knew maternal care and love, and methinks I yet strangely thirst after the undiscovered fountain of young affections, whose waters never reached the burning desert of my spirit. Who and what am I?—and whither tend the strange, the meteor-like phenomena of my sad and isolated career? Ah! had Heaven given me so sweet and beautiful a being for a mother, I could not have been what thy son is; I had not been the forlorn one I now am. Thus, indeed, I should have loved, and you would not have driven me angrily from you, as late you did, when I fell weak as a child, and trembled at your voice and frown. I should have felt for you an affection and devotedness, beyond all that was ever experienced by a child for its parent. There is a magic something in thy every look, and word, and act, which draws me close and closer towards you;—and call it not imagination, enthusiasm, or insanity; for if so, let me dream on, and believe that I am something dearer to you than I can explain. Oh! not at mine;—it is I, who, stretched at your feet, methinks, should promise duty and obedience—should seek thy blessing and thy love, and bask in the pure, sunny light of those sweet approving eyes! What secret spell thus throws

me at your feet, and impels me with soul-subduing power to embrace you. Yes, breathing picture of my childhood's strange and fondest dreams!—blessed be thy lot;—and not only be my sovereign; but the inspirer of my every virtue,—to re-inspire thee with all that is best and noblest to cast lustre — enduring lustre — round thy name and throne. Yes, dear and sovereign lady, you will open the prison-door of the wretched captive and bid her go free; you will bind my heart and all its affections to your own, and you will banish from your presence the misguided being who is called your son; until, having learned to govern himself, he be fit to reign over his people."

"Villain and traitor!" cried the princess, in extreme anxiety and alarm, as she tore herself from the enthusiast who had attempted to detain her, and who, when he felt himself thus indignantly repulsed, burst into tears. She hastened to the door, but, turning towards him, exclaimed, in a voice of bitter scorn, "You are mad, and presumptuous,—and wicked, I fear, as you are mad. Is this what the people call the humility and godliness of a saint?—such freedom of tongue, such disrespect for superior rank! You shall no more abuse my goodness. Away! away from this place, sir! Dare no more to appear before my eyes!"

The naturally sweet expression and beauty of her countenance, heightened till now by womanly alarm and confusion, suddenly assumed the dark, indignant expression of threatening and insulted power. Her eyes sparkled, her whole person appeared to dilate with a sense of offended pride; and the startled and dismayed enthusiast imagined

he saw before him the form of the angry angel about to drive him from the paradise of his first happy home. Struggling hard to repress the contending emotions which shook his tortured bosom, he approached the princess, and with difficulty, uttered these words:

"Saintly and lovely as I thought thee, it was my hope not to injure, but to save. Alas! pride, passion and injustice,—the indomitable selfishness of wealth and rank,—are more powerful than the word of God. An impulse, above my own will, bade me approach thee, as would thy guardian angel, to counsel and to protect. But it is passed; the dear and lofty aspirings of my youth are blasted; I begin to despair of virtue and of good. I will go,—I will obey you!—Yet," he added, in a more energetic tone, "I cannot leave you in the paths of destruction, nor try to check your fatal career. I will not repay your ban of exile with hate or revenge; I will requite you with good deeds, the memory of which, when I am no more, shall shed a sweet fragrance, and blossom even in the dust. If human power, inspired by the Most High, can snatch thy beloved son, — ah, would *I* were so loved, — from utter perdition, and save your people, — I am he who am delegated for the work, and shall by this expiate the offence, which, Heaven knows how undesignedly, I have given you."

He bowed his head sorrowfully, and rushed from her presence without again trusting himself to gaze upon her. As if pursued by some fearful curse, he hastened down the most dark, secluded paths, from the castle-gardens into the forest, im-

pelled by feelings as wild and desolate as the savage scenery which soon opened upon his view. He darted into the leafiest thickets, startling the wild deer from their quiet haunts.

" Happy creatures !" he exclaimed, as he smote his breast, and shed tears of bitterness over his disappointed hopes, " why should a wretch like me disturb your forest home?"

Notwithstanding the abruptness of his dismissal, and the harsh, indignant terms in which it was couched, the form of the margravine still haunted his imagination with that strange, indefinite power, from which he could not free himself, and for which he could not account. Stretched upon the ground, he ceased not to bewail his hapless destiny in solitude; his burning forehead was now bathed with the big drops of anguish; his eyes fixed, in mournful speculation, upon the earth. At length, breaking from the spell which oppressed him, he pursued his way through the dark, embowering shadows of the forest trees, which flung a cold and gloomy air even in the path of the fierce noon-day sun. To the intense heat there succeeded omens of an approaching storm;—the voice of the thunder began to roll among the hills; the face of the heavens grew dark, and the big, heavy drops came beating at intervals upon the thick, leafy canopy over his head, startling, as they fell through the open spaces of the forest glades, the cowering birds, or the wild deer. The winds began to rise with a sighing dirge-like sound; the whispering of the leaves gradually grew louder, till there burst on the ear that wild whistling and shrieking wail, which seems to give language to the spirit of the

storm. And it spoke to the soul of the wanderer in accents of woe and awe, which he had never before experienced, till, eager to fly from the excess of wild and sad emotions, he resolved to retrace his steps, and seek the shelter of a rude cabin not far from the banks of the desert lake. As he approached the spot, the figure of Helen suddenly burst upon him, as she also hastened to make it an asylum from the growing terrors of the storm.

Scarcely did Leodegar recognize the features of the lovely girl, so greatly had she suffered from recent agitation and anxiety. The flush upon her cheek was not the glow of health, and the light of her radiant eye had faded. With an exclamation of unfeigned surprise, she welcomed, and held out her hand to the enthusiast. "What good fortune is mine that I meet you here, revered sir!" she exclaimed, in an animated tone; — "do you know, I left my companions and my work for the very purpose of finding you. Thanks be to Heaven that it is you, when I might have been met by a spirit of evil, instead of good, in this wild and desert place!"

"Of evil?" repeated Leodegar, bitterly: "you have left Lady Eberstein in the castle, and surely there ——"

The pale and fearful Helen interrupted her friend, and said, in a low tone, as she cast her eyes anxiously all around, "Do not believe it; there is a mystery, —the mystery of sin, which infects the whole atmosphere of this castle: it is, or has been, the scene of evil deeds. The tempter,—the oppressor, —is abroad,—the high-born oppressor! He tracked

my steps this very morning; he threatened to return in the evening! But I will not speak of him; I will not syllable his name! But my heart is full of anguish: and ever since I came hither, and knew what court life and court personages really are, I ceaselessly weep over my banished peace. Little did I dream of the base servility, the slavery of heart and mind, the sacrifice of truth and honour, which royalty and rank exact. I know your noble, generous nature, and to whom could I better breathe my sorrows than to you?"

"Lady," said Leodegar, with a sigh, "I have lost the power of comforting the afflicted—I am inconsolable myself—yet is there something so peculiar, so touching in your situation and your distress, that I cannot withhold from you my warm sympathy and pity for your sufferings."

With these words, he led Helen towards a rustic seat near the banks of the lake, overgrown with wild honeysuckle and lichen, and begged her to open her whole mind as to a father or a brother in whom she confided. In broken, half-audible words, the timid girl complied. "Could you have imagined such a thing, sir? the margrave is here, concealed, and in disguise."

"The margrave!" exclaimed Leodegar, sighing deeply, while a darker shade gathered on his brow.

"What may be his will, or with what object he is come," continued Helen, a glow of virtuous shame and indignation suffusing her countenance, "I have no right to inquire; and yet I augur some evil. Early yesterday, I was trying to amuse my thoughts by walking in the flower garden, when, as if he had sprung from the earth, the mar-

grave stood before me in a hunter's dress. He had scarcely until then had a glimpse of me, having seen me only once, and by torch-light, at the summer villa; and yet he recognized me in a moment. He addressed me, for I was rivetted to the spot with surprise and terror. He seized my hand, and I feel as if it yet burned with the violence of his grasp. I need not tell you with what disgust I heard his protestations of love. He smiled with that confident, triumphant air, as he promised that he would return and see me again this very evening —at the same time threatening me, if I should not appear, and laying strict injunctions that I should not breathe a word of what had passed, or of his presence at the castle, to any living being, least of all to his mother."

The agitated girl could say no more. She looked round, as if afraid to encounter the object of her fears, and gasped for breath, at the same time drawing nearer Leodegar for protection.

With contracted brow and troubled voice, the young enthusiast replied—"My poor Helen! and has the moment I so much dreaded already arrived? Hath the talon of the vulture been raised, to pounce upon the dove so soon? Helpless innocence! thy gentle bosom might well beat with alarm. Of a truth, the seducer is at thy side, and it is high time to flee the fatal spring of the hungry lion!"

"Unhappy as I am," murmured Helen, "I feel that only evil will be my portion at this bad court. But tell me, my friend, my father!—tell me how I shall escape the snares of this bold, fearful man? Shall I unfold all to the margravine, and

run the risk of incurring the vengeance of her son ?"

"Better his vengeance than his love. The spoiler of youthful beauty—the seducer—at once fascinates and poisons with his breath. Can he have yet dazzled your eyes by flattering and exciting your ambition, and drawing a false picture of a brilliant future, which would arrive to seal your sad destiny, as Lady Isaura knows by bitter experience? Can the suggestions of that Eberstein have already prepared the way to undermine that perfect innocence, and turn it to the base and execrable uses of a life at court ?"

"Lady Eberstein," replied Helen, "warned me against the margrave, often describing him to me as a demon in human shape; it was therefore I dreaded him so much that I could not even fly; and I still feel a strange terror, for which I can give no other reason. Besides, he is on the eve of marriage, as I hear; and how sinful would be his love for another! and even were he free, and not a prince, I could feel no disposition to listen to his addresses, while——"

"Those words," interrupted Leodegar warmly, "lead me to trust that you are yet safe. Believe me, poor girl, there is nothing to envy in an alliance with him, could he make you queen of the world, instead of a paltry principality, which generates more pride and worthlessness than a wider reign. He is unworthy a woman's virtuous love; his bosom is a deep, black pit; the arrow of love can never reach his false and indurated heart! It is only the dagger which should be the portion of every tyrant, who, supreme in power, sins with

impunity against nature and humanity; and by Heavens! to save thee, the young, the beautiful, the innocent, I—I would guide that dagger home!"

Helen covered her face with her hands, as if to avoid some object his dreadful words had conjured up; but the enthusiast's head had sunk powerless upon his breast, his fiery eye and animated expression were quenched, his arms fell motionless by his side; and, as if filled with remorse for this gust of passion, his tears fell thick and fast upon the ground. "What have I dared to say?" he exclaimed; "have I not sworn by the blessed Virgin, that he should be saved—that not a hand should be raised against him? Rash oath! — which cannot now be recalled, eager as I may be to protect others from his base designs. But you must shun his haunts; that is your most imperative duty. Reveal not his villany to his mother, by whom he is loved to idolatry; trust it not to your hypocritical friend; confide not in your own strength of resistance;—flight alone can save you."

"But whither?" sobbed out the agitated girl. "I am an orphan, and I have no brothers. My aunt will spurn me from her if I refuse to disclose . . . ."

"Never! beware of that," cried the enthusiast; "you would not be the first victim offered up by the favourite maid of honour to the idol son. And why seek mortal aid?—reigns not the living God? Clothes he not the lilies of the field? Doth He not balance the measure of our days in his hands? I too, my poor Helen, am again driven

forth into the wide world, and yet I will not lie down and die, but resign myself to live and breathe my appointed time."

"You are leaving this place?" inquired Helen quickly. "Oh! how shall I be enabled to support my lot alone among such evil ones; for, alas! there are other secrets besides the persecutions of the prince, which weigh down my heart, in which I cannot, and will not participate. I must burst the horrid spell which they would throw around me, and fly. Leodegar, will you see me perish, or will you aid me in my flight? for in you only, of all human beings, have I perfect confidence. Heaven will not desert us, for its protection hath been promised to the orphan and the friendless in the hour of their distress."

"Helen," replied Leodegar sadly, "you will not choose virtue for your companion in accompanying me. I have been driven from all hope and bliss, and never, never shall I more enjoy peace on earth. Yet the task to which I have pledged myself must be accomplished. I must finish the work. I shall perish—but my death will give peace and safety to others."

"You, yourself comfortless!" exclaimed Helen, in a tone of enthusiastic sympathy. "Alas! I tremble lest you be seeking strife, and shunning peace—that peace which your lofty faith, and generous devotion to others, ought to insure for you. Of a truth you bear a noble heart, concealed under a wonderfully rare and versatile character, which few can appreciate. Oh! willingly would I sacrifice this my wretched life, to enable you to resume

the high duties, the beneficial objects, you had proposed to yourself at court; yes, I would die for it!"

These words seemed to electrify the subdued and troubled soul of the enthusiast; and sudden as the lightning's flash the conviction shot across his mind, that he was beloved. He gazed speechlessly on the beautifully animated,—the almost inspired countenance of the young and lovely speaker; and the open, perfectly guileless expression of her devoted feelings threw a spell upon him, which he vainly tried to break. He felt a new and strange delight as he rivetted his eye upon that heavenly face and exquisitely moulded form. She had pressed one hand, in her high-wrought emotion, upon her heart, as if to witness to the truth of her devotion for him, and the other rested affectionately and confidingly upon the arm of her companion.

The enthusiast was the first to speak; for joy and agitation on catching the import of Helen's words for a time deprived him of every faculty but that of contemplating the object of his fascinated sight. In a trembling thrilling tone,—no longer master of his feelings,—he murmured in her ear, "Do I augur aright the will of the Most High? do I trace his direction in the miraculous change he is about to work in the hearts of his children? Oh how good is God! how merciful and bountiful in all he gives us; in all he takes away. Had I not been banished hence this day for speaking the truth, and interceding warmly for the suffering captive, I should not have thus been tenfold blessed in Helen's pure devoted love. Yes! under this wild and stormy sky, while his winged mes-

sengers,—the winds sweep around—the mighty thunders speak his power from heaven to earth,—and the woods and lakes and hills mingle their deep and fearful music with the triumph of the tempest—even in such an hour as this, hath He caused a bright and lovely spring to blossom round us in the wild. My Helen! angel of light and hope,—you will love me; you will not leave me in my sorrow."

He turned towards her, a deep blush crimsoned her cheek and neck; he felt her hands tremble in his,—her whole frame seemed to vibrate with the strange and sweet sensations, to which the declaration of Leodegar's attachment gave birth. But the next moment the blood forsook her cheek, and an expression of terror was visible,—her eye appeared fixed upon some fearful object, and uttering a cry of alarm, she disappeared from the enthusiast's side, swift as a shadow of the forest. Scarcely could he catch the sound of her rapid flight, or one glimpse of her snow-white robes. He was once more alone, but his whole attitude and expression still partook of the ecstacy with which his fascinated gaze had last dwelt upon Helen's features, and those charms which he felt had for ever linked his soul with hers. He stood like one inspired,—his arms folded upon his heart,—his joyous, triumphant look, directed full of gratitude to Heaven, for the one sweet drop which had thus mingled in the cup of his affliction.

Exhausted by this strange exaltation of his feelings, he gradually fell into a milder and more mournful mood. He thought with surprise and grief of Helen's sudden disappearance, and the

apparent terror with which she had fled: Perplexed with a variety of conjectures, he was about to leave the spot, when he suddenly started back as his eye met another fixed with a scornful expression upon his face. In a moment the Lady of Eberstein stood before him, as if she had sprung out of the water of the lake, and he was no longer at a loss to account for Helen's alarm and flight. She had witnessed their interview, and would doubtless do all to blast their newly budding hopes. Mingled disappointment and alarm were evident in the repulsive tone with which he addressed her.

"You here, Margaret! is it the Lady Eberstein I see?"

"The politeness of a philosopher," she replied, "was, proverbially, sir, never very great. This morning I entreated you to grant me a moment's interview, to which you consented, but it seems you think light of an engagement to a friend, when you wish to devote your time to an amiable young pupil." She pointed to the spot where Helen had disappeared.

Leodegar coolly replied: "That guileless being requires no tutor, her guardian spirit directs her paths, and we might both, methinks, learn from Helen."

"That, as it may please you," retorted the lady, scornfully; "yet I cannot indulge you in it this moment, as I have to acquaint you with matters of a more pressing and important nature. There is danger too, abroad. A messenger of the duke has been with me. The old ruler is become impatient, my friend, to know something more of your pro-

ceedings, hearing what your recent conduct has been. He is for maintaining subordination, and is fond of summary measures;—you have made yourself liable to the sharpest, however long they have been delayed. What message shall I report to his highness? It is time that his secret anger should vent itself openly by some stroke of retributive justice. The margrave's marriage is, as you are doubtless aware, on the eve of being celebrated; and it is, therefore, full time that the blow be struck."

Leodegar, yet undecided, was silent, and Eberstein proceeded:

"A pretext has been found, which at once permits the duke to occupy the territory with his troops. A fierce and cruel struggle is approaching, for tyranny and barbarity go hand in hand. Yonder tower is the lofty tomb of that poor wretch Lafare;—the mother's pride and inhumanity, and the son's base desertion, after his having gained her affections, there consign her to a living death. Under pretence of conveying her home, she was secretly trapped into his dungeon, by that ready tool, Dandowich, during the night. I then occupied the red chamber, in which the opening of the chimney is upon a level with the tower prison, and the captive, being aware of my near residence, availed herself of the circumstance, and by means of a long thread attached to a letter, she was enabled to correspond with me. Indeed we could hear each other's voices, and, on a given signal, could even converse. A lead pencil, and the marriage promise, with which Isaura held the tyrant in jeopardy, were the only weapons she had

retained, and spite of the strictest search, they were not discovered. She long refused to believe her lover a party to the kidnapping of her person, but at length I convinced her of the fact. The marriage promise, as witness against him, with a letter appealing for pity and help, came into my hands, directed to the duke, the margrave's uncle. This plan I had suggested, as the only one to give her a chance of freedom; perhaps to snatch her from a secret death. The packet has been forwarded to its destination, and I gave the messenger, who is in the duke's confidence, a hint that, at a certain hour, Erich would be found upon the borders of his master's territory, when it would not be difficult to pounce upon him, put him into durance, or get rid of him in some way. You know that I hate the prince; and you, too, like most others who have had the least connexion with him, must detest his character.—The hour of retribution is at hand; there is only one way of averting the duke's indignation which your strange apathy and indecision have provoked; and that is an assurance that you will show a more active and resolute spirit, when circumstances shall again bring the fated and despotic prince within your reach."

"I will myself," replied the enthusiast, after a brief internal struggle, "haste to acquaint the duke with my intentions. I will see him, since it has pleased the margravine to dismiss me."

"Already? The pious hypocrite to persecute the saint?" exclaimed Eberstein, with a sardonic laugh. She then added, evidently chagrined at Leodegar's scornful and repulsive looks:—"But

you need give yourself no farther trouble. To-morrow I expect the duke, now on the borders, in the neighbourhood of this castle. My letter will reach him to-day; assuredly to-morrow he will be here."

"You are prompt, my lady," observed the enthusiast, significantly; "your strokes, like those of a skilful fencer, are at once deliberate and rapid. Yet what arms you so inexorably against your liege lord and lady, instead of being busy in acts of peace and charity? What has excited such fierce hatred in the breast of one who was before so gentle and retiring? When I took a vow to sacrifice any one who should dare to trample religion and its ministers in the dust, it was because I honour both. I am a man, ardent and wild in my native temperament, and wilder in my gloom. But, lady, how has he injured you, that you abhor his name beyond forgiveness?"

Margaret Eberstein at this question fixed her eye in confusion upon the ground — she could not bear the enthusiast's look; she breathed quick, and her bosom heaved with feelings of mingled scorn, rage, and agony. She lost her self-command, threw up her hands towards heaven, and in deep, shuddering accents, broke forth:—

"By holy truth!—true as the existence of my own soul!—not all the light of heaven's firmament would burn out the marks of disgrace which that monster fixed upon me; and sooner will those stars fade and become extinguished, than the thirst of vengeance which consumes my soul, and has turned my bosom into stone."

She turned quickly, as if angry with herself for the emotion she had betrayed; but as she bent her eye upon the sullen, desert lake, she shrieked and exclaimed :—

"Woe is me! woe is me! Did you see it? Did not these waters seem to rise up? Did you not feel the earth shake?"

"As I live," exclaimed Leodegar, gazing intently round him, "I felt it!—I saw it too!"

As he spoke, they both shuddered, upon becoming sensible of a repetition of the same strange agitation in the earth and water; the summit of the Titanberg raised itself with a hoarse, rumbling sound, and then sank down.

"Woe! woe!" repeated the wretched, terrified woman. "That ghastly head!! Oh, help!"

"It is an earthquake!" cried Leodegar. "Come away; let us gain the vicinity of human dwellings; lest some fragments of the groaning earth bury us beneath their ruins."

"Alas!" muttered the conscience-stricken lady, sobbing and shrieking with all the anguish of a soul burdened with its sin. "Are you sure the vault of heaven will not fall, and grind us into very dust?"

In a state of mind bordering upon frenzy, the Lady Eberstein reached the castle. The storm had now passed,—the commotion of earth and waters ceased; but that of the fear-haunted bosom does not so soon subside. Nature resumed her gentle mood; anxiety and terror fled before her smiles; the calm air and sunny sky re-appeared; and soon a gentle shower fell softly upon herb, and flower,

and tree; and every charm of earth, that had, ere-while, sunk under the excessive sultriness, and thirst, and lassitude, came with a lovelier and fresher lustre, upon the eye.

CHAPTER VII.

As the bright heaven oped its fountain springs,
So spread the infernal deep its demon wings."
German MS.

The greatest confusion reigned in the castle. An old, half-decayed stable, in the court-yard, had tumbled down; and immediately all eyes were directed, with the utmost terror, to the towers and roofs, and other parts of the palace. The dreadful storm of thunder, hail, and torrents of rain, prevented all egress and flight;—the miserable inmates of the castle awaiting the progress of the expected ruin with beating hearts. The troubled earth, however, settled down again, with a low, rumbling sound; the cry of the women ceased by degrees, till a deep, ominous silence took its place. Still the margravine knelt before the altar in her private chamber, whither terror had driven the whole of her attendants, and the inhabitants of the castle. With an earnestness and fervour, inspired by her fears, the princess addressed herself to the holy virgin and all the saints. But she was scarcely audible

from the rattling of the doors and windows, and the violence of the winds resounding through the chimneys, and from tower to keep.

After being for a considerable time engaged in her devotions, the margravine's mind reverted to the unhappy lady in the tower; to whom, with great caution and secrecy, she despatched the porteress, with directions to afford her all the consolation and assistance, which her situation required.

The evening of that day set in dark and cheerless, and the princess now found herself in the red chamber wholly alone. She went from window to window, and, with listless eye, gazed upon the mournful prospect, as the shades of twilight gathered thicker over the earth. A rising mist soon nearly enveloped every surrounding object, hanging, like an evil portent, over the castle. The late tremors of the earth,—the apartment itself,—in which her sister had died years before,—her interview with the enthusiast;—all conspired to excite her imagination. "Can it be possible," she said, muttering to herself, "that Heaven's displeasure should fall upon me for the necessary coercion I am compelled to employ towards Isaura? or because I banished that wild, untutored enthusiast from my presence? Can that man lay claim to any real spiritual power? can he, for love of Heaven, consent to wield temporal arms? can he, by his secret influence, have raised this tremendous convulsion of the elements? Are there really threatening demons let loose, who sport with the destinies of man;—who impel them onwards into the toils of

love, or hate, or despair? And does this strange Leodegar belong to such as these? No; my heart tells me not. His power, whatever may be its nature or extent, is not derived from an alliance with the Evil One. Has he not made it evident, indeed, by his wonderful powers of healing, and grace, and good works, that he must derive it from an opposite source? Then how beautifully he discourses 'divine music,' in the words of truth and holiness, with which he inculcates the love of God. Hates he not violence and tyranny of every description? Did he not boldly advocate the cause of the captive Isaura, and even threaten me if I should persist? Lastly, had he not the nobleness, at the very moment when I drove him, half distracted, from my side, to speak only words of peace, and promise me safety and good deeds in return for hatred and persecution? He can be no evil-minded man, although he may have human frailties; and his stormy nature cannot be made obedient even to his own prayers. I will now, therefore, try to repose, with the full determination that to-morrow's morn shall witness my reconciliation with Isaura;—that which my judgment wills, and not what the state expediency of the princess-mother might seem to exact from me!"

A number of horsemen were heard galloping into the court-yard below. The sound of hoofs made the castle ring from tower to keep; and Helen came to announce, that the officers from the Sommersitz had arrived in full array, to pay their respects to their princess. The margravine intimated her satisfaction, and a desire to see the loyal gentlemen. They made their appearance in

the most lamentable plight, their garments being literally saturated with the rain, and their limbs stiffened and exhausted by fatigue. There was the lord steward, the master of the horse, the satellite captain, and the Chevalier de la Montée, who modestly kept his station in the rear, under the jealous eye and frown of the Dalmatian Dandowich, who had accompanied the margravine to the castle, and contrived to recover every thread of the intrigues and management of affairs.

My lord steward, as proud as a minister of Lilliput, and a confirmed proser, opened his address to her highness with a solemn assurance, that upon the visitation of the sudden and horrible shadow of an earthquake, all her faithful servants in the Sommersitz raised a general lamentation;—that they were deprived by her absence of the power of protecting the person of their beloved patroness. That they were, nevertheless, universally seized with a desire to ensure the safety and well-being of a sovereign they so much revered; and to effect this, it was determined to send a choice body, to render all needful assistance, and, if possible, to bring her back with them, spite of flood and fire; nor to stop till they had deposited their princely treasure in the palace of the lofty and well-secured Favorita.

The margravine replied to the oration of the steward, in the most winning and complimentary terms,—that she regarded their extreme care and devotion to her person with feelings of grateful pleasure; at the same time she must be allowed to express her surprise that the marshal, "the

foremost man among them all," had not appeared at their head.

The roguish steward, a bitter enemy of the marshal, and who had yet to wipe off many a score long set against his name, only gave a most emphatic shrug of the shoulders. The master of the horse, however, interpreted it into words, describing how the marshal, in the act of mounting his horse, fell back, and unfortunately sprained his ancle. For this reason, the horse captain had volunteered in the marshal's place, and was the bearer of a letter which had been entrusted to him by the lady of the keys, (*vulgaricè* housekeeper), intended for her highness's inspection.

The hauptman delivered his despatches with a stiff compliment, and the margravine, laughing heartily, read them through. On concluding, she once more expressed her gratitude to these brave lords; and bidding them farewell, under the plea of retiring to rest, declared that she should not fail to comply with their wishes; in short, by the afternoon of the ensuing day, she would be prepared to accompany them back to her summer villa.

With profusion of bows and well-turned compliments, the bold courtiers took their leave, with the exception of De la Montée, who lingered as if not forming one of the party. The margravine once more made a motion for him to retire; instead of which, he approached and addressed her with perfect ease and freedom,—" It was quite becoming upon my part, most gracious princess, to make my *entrée* with those good gentlemen, as the only means of beholding your gra-

cious countenance; not, however, to accompany them out. Now that their mission is at an end, and I behold you in perfect safety, while I pour forth my congratulations for the danger so happily over, I cannot prevail upon myself to leave your fair side, all unguarded princess, but must herewith beg to seal and sign myself your obedient, humble servant!"

"Very good, Chevalier de la Montée," rejoined the margravine, little entertained with his rambling and self-sufficient manner; "I thank you as I do the rest of my faithful adherents. I should much regret, however, that any kind of anxiety respecting my person should induce you to abandon the station to which you had been appointed by the favour of the margrave. Pray recollect for the future, that you will be doing what is most pleasant to my feelings, when you make a point of performing, with more exactness, the commands given you by my son, than has hitherto been the case. Do so, and meantime remain assured of my disposition towards you."

De la Montée gave a roguish laugh, and, very little daunted, went on to say, "To your highness's devoted servitor, such an assurance is inestimable. But you must forgive me if I cannot make up my mind to leave your service; — there only I will never obey your highness."

The margravine regarded him with astonishment, but he ran on —

"I am no adept in court-phrase and mincing manners. I acquired my greatness in the field, where a strong arm and a stout heart stand us in better stead than a multitude of compliments,

though your highness and I are comparatively but little acquainted. I shall soon establish a claim to a more familiar footing, when I can bring my lips to pronounce words which, I flatter myself, will not sound very harshly in your highness's ears."

"Chevalier! methinks this is strange discourse!"

"Strange!" repeated De la Montée, in a bantering tone; "aye, strange as my own destiny, — as my whole life, — my identity, — for I have yet to learn who I am, and what is my name. Yes, gracious princess, this name, I am come to ascertain from you."

"Sir! how dare you?" stammered out the margravine.

"Scarcely could a better hour be found to rouse the slumbering heart and conscience of a princess!" exclaimed the bold soldier. "To that conscience, here, with the stillness and solemnity of night around us, and in the presence of Heaven, I solemnly appeal!"

"Man!"

"Do you deny, gracious lady, that you once dared to love another, while you were linked by fate with a coarse, unworthy, and unsympathizing consort?"

"Just Heaven!" cried the margravine, who beheld a second Leodegar kneeling before her, while her heart swelled with a thousand wild recollections, — "what sort of language, madman, is this?"

"My gracious princess!" he cried, seizing her hands, and pressing them in his. "I claim that place in your heart, which nature and justice alike assign me!"

The margravine, with a cry of indignant horror, attempted to free herself from the young soldier's grasp, and, at the same moment, an uproar in the adjoining chamber, and the voice of a man calling loudly, struck on her ear, and she believed that she was beset by traitors. Rushing to the door, she shrieked for help, but the chamberlain Dandowich made not his appearance. Helen, however, heard the princess's cries, and, hastening to the spot, found her still struggling with the young officer, who beseeched her to be calm and hear him. Half distracted, he also turned to Helen, threatening her life if she dared to breathe a word of the scene before her. As he spoke, the princess disengaged herself, and ran down the steps till she reached the castle-vaults ; but without encountering any of her officers or domestics.

Meantime the red chamber became the scene of another event; Leodegar suddenly appeared, having caught the sound of the margravine's cry, as he was approaching another part of the edifice, and instantly hastened to her succour. What was his horror, however, on beholding the lovely Helen in the grasp of De la Montée, who appeared to have taken leave of his wits. With a giant's force, Leodegar delivered Helen from the grasp of her assailant, and then commanded him instantly to quit the place. The officer, recovering the shock, and bitterly cursing the enthusiast in French, Dutch and German, with equal facility, refused to stir. The enthusiast was on the point of seizing him, in spite of his sword, when the margravine, finding that assistance had arrived, again entered the room. Emboldened by Leodegar's presence,

she commanded the officer to leave the room, in a voice, which even *he* could not disregard. As he went out, he exclaimed, trembling with rage, " Your highness will repent this! You will not dare to use *me* thus ignominiously again. I will speak!—before a thousand eyes and ears I will out with the truth,—and then tremble in your turn!"

" Away with him!" was the answer. " My good Leodegar, do me that service!—rid me of his presence!"

Quick as the thought, the enthusiast, with a giant's grasp, fastened upon the soldier ere he had time to draw; and, as he dragged him through the passage, the officer exclaimed, in a loud voice, " My name is Isidor; princess, remember Isidor!"

At those words, Leodegar saw the margravine fall senseless upon the ground, but he continued to drag the struggling officer from the spot, till, reaching a retired room, he thrust him into it, and closed the door upon them both.

" Wretched man!" he exclaimed, " what have you done!—dared you to lay a hand upon the sacred person of the princess? What would you,—what was your motive for such an act?"

De la Montée still lay breathless upon the spot where Leodegar had hurled him, such was the force of his single arm.

" Curse on the world! curse on my birth! and curse on the vile, unnatural being, who spurned ere she would hear me!" were the first sounds that broke from the enraged officer; " but her evil acts shall be made manifest to the whole world. Those widows' weeds cannot conceal all the rank poisonous flowers that blow beneath them!"

"Man!" exclaimed Leodegar, indignantly, "you are talking away your own life. In a few moments the guard will be with you, and a dungeon your dwelling-place."

"The guard!" exclaimed De la Montée, with a bitter laugh; "the guard touch me! — I a prisoner! Her gracious highness will be cautious how she ventures to put an insult like that upon me. I have given her my name, and she will hardly after that, I think, throw me into chains!"

Leodegar listened in mute astonishment, regarding the officer with hatred and aversion he sought not to disguise. A feeling of jealousy also was rankling at his heart. The strange, indefinable affection he had felt for the margravine, from the moment he had beheld her, made him revolt at the terms in which another dared to speak of her, much more to claim a power over her actions. The outrageous conduct of the offender, also, towards Helen, was an additional aggravation in the eyes of one so passionately devoted to her as the enthusiast. He was scarcely master of his feelings; yet he struggled hard against the temptation to take summary and severe vengeance upon De la Montée. He fixed his eye upon a crucifix,—he tried to raise his thoughts in prayer,—it was in vain: the object which had awakened all his fiercest passions was before him; and he still saw his honoured princess, and the timid, beautiful Helen, in the grasp of the madman. A moment's reflection, however, convinced him, that in ridding the margravine of the intruder, he had done all that he was justified in performing, and that he had no right to anticipate her justice.

"This tempest of passion avails not," said Leodegar, addressing the officer, and stifling the scorn he could not but feel, as he beheld the mad youth still vainly storming, and then, with as abject a change of mind, burying his face in his hands.

"I will speak with her again!" was the officer's reply; — "speak! — speak! — write! — write in blood, if she drive me to it! I am no vain fool! — I know what I will, — and can, — and she shall learn to know me, too!"

"Sir! you will never see the margravine more!"

De la Montée snapped his fingers by way of reply, and afterwards observed: "Sir priest, I was born for something above the common lot of men! Destiny points out to me a higher distinction than that poor gown — a degree above the lacquey's livery!"

"Take care, sir! — select your words with more discretion," said Leodegar, calmly.

"Sir," was the quick reply, "I am in no mood to pick my phrases. I have suffered foul wrong, and will have justice if it is to be obtained in Germany: and if I cannot win it from the conscience or the fears of the margravine, I shall appeal at once to the emperor and the diet, and obtain from the high court chamber a diploma to authorise my legitimacy."

"This is mere rant," exclaimed Leodegar, with impatience.

De la Montée cast a sharp, spiteful look at the other; then assuming a sullen, offended air, he said with a jeering laugh: "And why, most worthy sir, should I delay to enlighten your sagacity, and reveal what it seems is hidden from your se-

cond sight? You have the fame of being a raiser of the dead,—a worker of miracles by fasting and prayer,—and moreover, of being virtually the father confessor and almoner of her serene highness! A manifold office, worthy of your humility! Honour be to the cloth! You shall hear all—nay, more; you shall be my ambassador to your mistress, and it will well become your sanctity to enact the mediator between us. Know, then, in the first place, that he whom you taunt with such indignity is her highness's most natural son!"

"How!—speak you truth, or in mockery, or in madness?"

"Ha, ha! your worthiness shall soon know whether my words be the raving of insanity or intoxication. Have you never heard of the carnival, at which the princess, then at the court of her sister, in Italy, was present? Nor of a certain good fellow, called Boncampo, who made himself more agreeable in the princess's eyes than her own ice-eater of a consort? Well, it so happens that Boncampo was my father. My mother continued in Italy until I was born, and previously to her departure, arranged for my being consigned to the guardianship of a simple, unsuspicious citizen, who died shortly after he had acquitted himself of the charge of my nurture and education."

"Were you not, sir," said Leodegar, "so very decided and particular in your assertions, I should believe you were amusing me with an old woman's story."

"Let these bear witness!" and De la Montée took a small packet from his inner coat. "These will turn my fiction into proof as strong as holy

writ. Hasten, most worthy minister of Heaven!—go, and say to the sinful widow all I have just informed you of; and should she deny it, then place in her hands the documents herein contained. She will no longer dare to maintain her obstinate silence, but find herself compelled to do that which is right."

Leodegar, all astonishment, took the case containing them from his hand. It bore a coat-of-arms, or rather the traces of one. The sight of this, as the enthusiast still held it extended in his hand, appeared to throw him into the most lively emotion; his hand trembled: his face grew alternately pale and flushed; and with eyes upraised to heaven, he grasped the case as if he dreaded it should escape from his possession. Pressing it to his bosom, he addressed the officer in a strangely wild and almost terrific voice: "Sir! sir!—I command you!—speak!—how did you obtain this? The documents in this box are not your property!—whence had you them?"

De la Montée sprang furiously up, and made a desperate effort to recover the papers. Leodegar repulsed him, and in a threatening tone repeated: "It is none of your property, sir!—you have told me a deliberate lie!"

"Robber!" stormed De la Montée, as he grasped at his sword; "dare you thus insult me?—this instant return me what is mine!"

"Thou art that thief, then, in the college at Lüttich!" thundered out Leodegar—"confess it, wretched man! It was you who broke open the rector's desk, took his money, and this precious box, wherein you hoped to find, no doubt, either

more money or bills of exchange. See, wretch!" he continued, as he opened the case with one hand, and with the other held the enraged officer, whom he had already disarmed, at bay; "these papers I have not yet read—I know not what they may be; but this portrait—this angelic face, I know it well. It strikes upon my imagination and my soul with the same resistless power, as in that eventful moment when it first met my eye. That, liar!—that is my own mother's portrait; and behold, I am he for whom thou hadst the audacity to think of imposing thyself upon the world."

As if struck by a thunderbolt, the conscious wretch sunk powerless upon his seat. The terror of his frame,—his pale but speechless lips,—his eye that sought to hide itself in the very earth,—and his unmanned limbs bore witness to his base crime, and to the truth of the enthusiast's words. With the cowardice of the criminal, too, he now embraced Leodegar's knees, whined out his first prayer for forgiveness, remission of his punishment, for pity and for help.

Leodegar, having secured the precious painting, with the no less valuable manuscripts, turned to the trembling and detected impostor before him, and addressing him in a severe and solemn tone, said: "Go hence! and if it may so be;—go, wretched man, in peace;—in peace with man at least, for I freely forgive thee, as I trust that Heaven will forgive thee for this atrocious attempt on the rights and the feelings of those who, whatever have been their errors, never did or imagined evil against you. But here, sir, you must no

longer remain. The margravine's commands, more especially your own conscience, must hurry you from the spot. Go, go! the eleventh hour hath struck; the castle gates are yet open. Death or imprisonment for life will be your portion here. Mount your horse and fly, sir, I beseech you; ere any accident shall discover to the margravine how egregiously you have dared to impose upon her. The fruits of your spoliation at college I shall retain as my own property—to me most inestimable. Go, repent, reform, and you may yet retrieve your fortunes and your fame." He took the impostor by the hand, who, overwhelmed with a variety of contradictory feelings, shame, remorse, gratitude and joy at his escape, was unable to utter a word. The enthusiast conducted De la Montée to the corridor into which the apartment opened, and whispering impressively in his ear, "Farewell—look to your life!"—pushed him gently out of the room, and having bolted the door, threw himself in an extasy of emotion upon his knees.

Long did he remain thus silent and absorbed, communing in grateful prayer with the Source of all truth, and good, and love; and blessing the wondrous providence, which had thus enabled him to pierce the fearful mystery of his birth.

With beating bosom and anxious hopes he arose, and approaching the table pressed the portrait and its case alternately to his lips; "Do I recover you, dear pledges, with my banished peace once more? That sweet look charms me back to the dwelling of the faithful Burchard, and to the scenes of my youth! Thou art the sealed treasure which

he oft told me would be every thing to me, on which I could build a hope in life! Ah! and you recall the sad hour in which I lost the foster-father of my youth. So good, so gentle, he treated me from the first moment as his companion and his friend. How, together we sought the fields at blush of dawn, gathered the flowers and herbs—relieved and visited the sick and the poor. How eagerly when my eye fell upon this case of papers, and I recalled Burchard's words, I secured them, and hastening away, tarried not till I had reached this side the Rhine, and found myself at the door of good Lüttich's school. He sealed up these papers for me,—that worthy rector who received me like a father. He prudently let me see only the portrait: 'That is thy mother,' he said,—I pressed it to my lips, and returned it to his holy keeping. Still I seemed to gaze upon it in my waking and my slumbering hours; when all at once, alas! I was rudely awakened from my dream of hope, by the daring crime of a ruffian, who, on leaving college, robbed the rector's desk of money, and me of my life's treasure—now mine again. It was the loss of the portrait which I most bitterly regretted; for the documents I had not perused, and the rector wisely withheld their contents from me. 'Long not,' he said, 'to learn the future.' Ah! the sacred deposit is once more before me; its secret history is ready for my eye. Here lies the riddle of Isidor Boncampo; here the message sent to Burchard, that the Princess Augusta would ever cherish and provide for Isidor; and here is the picture of that mother in the full glow of youth.

This, then, is the strange link of destiny which seemed to unite us; hence the nameless, sweet affection I have ever felt in her presence,—which I could not vanquish, and could not define;—and that mother spurned me!"

CHAPTER VIII.

De la Montée, overwhelmed with confusion, wretched and dismayed,—hastened from Leodegar's presence, with a view of consulting his safety by flight. Death or perpetual captivity would be his portion, should an account of his dark conspiracy reach the ears of the margravine and her son. Being in possession of the documents relating to Leodegar's birth, he had naturally supposed that he was placed beyond detection; but the hand of Providence was upon him in the very spot he had expected would witness the success of his imposture. He glided along the various passages of the castle. On descending a flight of steps, lighted from the top, he suddenly met Verena. She accosted him hastily:

"Her serene highness has sent me to seek you out, and inform you, that she lays her particular commands upon you, under no pretence whatever, to think of quitting the castle." Then, after a pause, during which she appeared to be struggling between her duty to the margravine, and pity for De la Montée, she added, "I will not disguise

from you that the purpose of her highness is vengeance. If, therefore, life and liberty be dear to you, you have no time to lose. In a very few minutes every gate of the castle will be closed, and egress will be impossible."

"But fire and thunder!" exclaimed the officer, "how am I to find my way out through these confounded passages that lead to nothing? I don't know where I am."

"If," said Verena, "you will turn to the left hand, after leaving this, and then keep straight on, you will come to a side-door. The farthest door from that upon the right, will bring you to my husband's apartment,—Steinsatz, the forester. You will find him just returned from a commission which he undertook at the command of the Lady of Eberstein. Say to him that I have sent you to him, and show him this ring as a token, and he will conduct you through the mazes of the castle to one of the gates, and set you at liberty. Away! and Heaven be your protector."

With these words, she ran as fast as she could, to wait upon the margravine, while De la Montée, without further delay, hastened through the castle, in the direction which Verena had indicated. Fear gave wings to his flight: but the sound of approaching voices arrested him, and he rushed into a side passage to conceal himself. He mounted some steps, and opening a door at the end, found himself in a dimly lighted apartment. The next instant the door of an adjoining cabinet was violently closed, and Dandowich stood before him.

"What do you want? how came you here?" was the angry inquiry of the little spiteful chamber-

lain; and from his extreme vexation and confusion, De la Montée inferred that his sudden appearance in the apartment was any thing but welcome to the other. In the hope that the man of office had not yet been made acquainted with the strange scene which had been played in the margravine's apartment, he resolved on attempting to turn his ignorance to the best account, and put a finishing hand to his tragi-comedy. He threw himself into the little chamberlain's arms, and in a voice which carried conviction in its tone, said: "You alone can save me! — be my friend, and I shall be ever grateful to you for my life and freedom."

"Chevalier!" inquired the chamberlain, "what am I to understand by this?"

"Come more into the light, my friend; look well at my features; do not you recognise me? Has the boy become so wholly lost in the man that you cannot trace the face of Isidor in mine? Have you forgotten the child you brought from Italy, and whom you entrusted to the hands of old Burchard in Germany here?"

"Impossible!" exclaimed the Dalmatian, in the deepest emotion and astonishment, as he fixed his sharp penetrating eyes upon the officer's features; "you,—you little Isidor! and yet all this terror!— How am I to reconcile it all?"

"Learn what has brought me hither, Dandowich. Yes! I have conversed with my mother,—I have prayed at her feet, that she would receive me, and yet she spurned me from her. She disowns,—disavows all knowledge of me. I am pursued to death. My documents are all in her hands,—but my life, my freedom, of which she also thirsts to

deprive me, may yet be preserved if you will stand my friend. Assist me out of this castle,—my last hope is in flight."

Dandowich was agitated; he paused and considered, and at length added, "And the margravine, you say, orders you to be pursued?"

"With relentless violence," replied De la Montée; "but in vain, for you will save me. The future will richly reward you for the good act. Fortune will not always prove my foe: the margrave is hated by the emperor and his own relatives, not loved by his people, and abhorred by the clergy and nobility,—in short, he must, soon or late, succumb to the storm,—a storm which will leave me something in the wreck. I shall then assume rank and power, and be sure that the half of the wealth I shall possess, shall be your own. All the treasures of the East, indeed, would not repay my benefactor for the boon I crave,—his assistance in finding one outlet from this cursed castle, which would make me his grateful friend for ever."

Dandowich eyeing him with a keen suspicious look, replied; "I know how to value the confidence you repose in me, and am flattered by your good opinion; but should I take such a step on my own responsibility, I should run my neck into a halter. I am merely a poor servitor. Here, however, sir, is one whose single word has more weight than all I can do." So saying, he threw open the door of the cabinet, and the figure of the margrave, with anrgy brow and fiery eye, confronted the wretched officer, who stood rivetted with surprise and terror to the spot. His conscience told him that all was discovered, and as Dandowich

rudely pushed him forward, he nearly fell to the ground. His first impulse was to fly, for he dared not meet the lcok of his commander and his master. At that moment the captain of the household guard, who had been recruiting his strength after the ride through the storm, with some convivial spirits, staggered into the room.

"Fire and fury!" cried the old hero of the Netherlands, "what are you doing here, Mr. Cashier? They are hunting you out in every corner of the castle, and ...."

"Are you mad?" interrupted Dandowich, as he closed the cabinet door on De la Montée and the margrave; "Silence, sir, and come this way."

The culprit and his judge were alone together. "Wretch!" exclaimed the latter, "what is the confession I am to hear? What audacious tale have you dared to spread abroad among my people? You are an arch-traitor to myself and to the margravine, my mother, and have merited the cord."

The officer could not utter a word, and fell at the prince's feet. "What! such a thing as thou dare to cast an aspersion upon the honour of the princess-mother," continued Erich, with irrepressible scorn; "aye, villain! and to talk of my downfall, and contemplate even my death, vile, low plotter in the dark!"

"Your gracious highness!" muttered the culprit, sinking upon his hands and face to the very ground, "I perish—I am lost—but oh! mercy, mercy!—I did not know—I did not anticipate—I own I merit death. But my life is in your hands, my prince, my merciful master. Spare me, I

beseech you, and let me not die with so many unrepented sins upon my unhappy soul!"

"Out on thee, man!" interrupted the margrave, "who hast dared in so shameful a manner to claim kindred with me. Rise, sir! let me see if you can assume at least the attitude of a man."

De la Montée, however, seemed unable to obey; he preserved the same prostrate position, and spoke not a word. The prince, half mad with rage, walked twice or thrice round him, till at length, mastering his feelings, he fixed his eye upon the wretched spectacle before him, and in a calmer tone observed:

"But I am wrong! Thou art too abject a thing to move the anger of a prince, and contempt masters the indignation which thy crimes have called forth. You have looked into the lion's mouth!—you have seen enough. Away with you!—hence! and though thou didst thirst for my blood, I will not dip my hands in thine."

The margrave's magnanimity touched the culprit's feelings; the truth was on the point of escaping from him, and he was about to confess the imposture, when the prince prevented him.

"Not a word, man! the fierce humour in which you found me has saved you. It has subsided—escape during the calm, and go far hence. Dare not to show your detested features near my court, nor to breathe a word reflecting upon my family. I shall hear, and signal vengeance will follow you."

There was that in the eye and voice of the margrave, which told the wretched impostor there was no more time to be lost. He made one confused obeisance, and hastening to obey the mandate,

sprang through the door with such eagerness, that Dandowich hardly caught a glance of him, as he rushed by.

The margrave, in a few minutes afterwards, opened the door, and beckoning to the sly Dalmatian to join him, said: "The man is as blind as a mole in these walls; go, take care of him—ship him safe off." He then returned into the cabinet, which closed after him.

"Was not that the margrave?" inquired the half-muddled captain, again popping his huge rotundity of face into the room.

"It was," replied Dandowich, with an ominous frown; "and you will know that it is he, if you let your foolish tongue betray him; for he is here, and he is not here; he is *incognito*—can you comprehend?"

"Heaven be good unto us!" replied the captain; "but that braggadocio of a Frenchman—what had he to say to him?"

"What he had to say to the Frenchman concerns not you. Let it suffice you to be told that it is the prince's pleasure that the Gaul be kept out of the way. Pressing matters require my presence in another place: will you take the fellow under your charge?"

"That will I," was the captain's answer.

"Well, be quick then; but see to it that he do not escape."

Without another word the captain rose from his seat, grasped his sword, and half walked, half reeled through the door. Unluckily for the poor culprit, who had been vainly exploring an outlet from this worse than prison-house, he came sud-

denly upon his pursuer in crossing a gallery, dimly lighted only by a single lamp.

"Halt, milksop! I arraign thee," cried the captain, in an insolent tone.

"Place there!" returned De la Montée quickly, as he laid his hand on his weapon; "let me pass on quietly, or ...."

A sharp thrust in the shoulder was the only reply, and as the captain drew back his sword he struck out the lamp. The officer, enraged at this attack, and the pain of the wound, threw himself with gigantic force upon the reeling assassin, dashed him to the ground, and rushed madly forwards over his fallen enemy down a flight of steps. Here he encountered another, who made directly at him.

"Ha! villain," cried De la Montée, "you too are one of the margrave's cut-throats!" and instantly closing with him, he attempted to fling him headlong over the staircase. But the other had a grasp on the officer's throat, and retained firm hold of the banisters.

"Now, friend," he exclaimed, "tell me who you are, and whither you are going?"

"The devil only knows," replied the officer. "What night-bird art thou? Quick! show me the way out of this infernal labyrinth. My wound burns, and I am covered with blood."

"Why, man, every gate is fast, or I had not been caught here. But loose thy hold—dost think I want to be strangled?"

"Art thou not sent to take my life?" asked De la Montée.

"Not I; but methought you came to take mine. Are you not in the margrave's pay?"

"No! I want to make my escape hence."

"It is all right, then," replied the man; "only come along with me, I will show you a safe place. But if you make a single motion to betray me, you die, by all the saints! by this good blade."

"Fear not," replied the officer; "I will be true to you as steel; especially as I guess you are no friend to the margrave. Come on, comrade."

Each at the same instant withdrew his grasp, and joined the same hands in friendly witness of mutual confidence and support.

De la Montée followed the stranger through a variety of dark intricate passages; and having first mistaken him for a hired bandit, was now equally astonished that he did not lead the way towards some of the vaults, as the best place of concealment. Nevertheless, whithersoever he might lead,—exhausted at once by rage and loss of blood,—the wretched officer cared not, but followed his guide.

At length the man stopped, and knocked gently at a small door. A woman's voice inquired from within, "Who is there?"

"It is I," replied the stranger, with a marked accent.

The bolt was withdrawn, and a lamp held up. His guide preceded the officer boldly into the room.

"Heavens!" cried the woman, as she cast her eyes on him; "is it your highness?"—and suddenly stopped as she saw the bleeding soldier. The latter fixed his eye on the speaker;—it was Margaret Von Eberstein!—and then on the stout, broad-shouldered man of fifty at his side, who spite of his forester's dress, had been addressed by

the title of highness. The mysterious stranger carefully fastened the door, and then spoke to Margaret:—"I here bring you a wounded man; see you to his wants. My return will explain to you, that by some unaccountable regulation, the whole of the gates are closed, though it is not yet gone the eleventh hour."

"Herr de la Montée!" exclaimed Von Eberstein, scarcely trusting her senses,—"And you, sir," casting an alarmed glance at the stranger, "how comes it that an officer of the margrave——?"

"Officer of the margrave!" exclaimed the stranger, rousing with the fury of a tiger; "what am I to think of that? Does the margrave assassinate his own officers?"

"The margrave!" repeated Eberstein, "who at this very time is busied with his mines!"

"The margrave is here, in this place," replied De la Montée, who now began to penetrate his design; "and he is disguised. I have the misfortune to be his relative: I am the son of the princess-mother. This day I avowed the fact."

"Ha!" cried Eberstein, recollecting herself, "the scene which took place to-night in the margravine's chamber! It is only within this half hour that she recovered her senses. They have sought you, sir, in all directions!"

"And I, meantime, was with my brother," replied the now hardened culprit. "He banished me from his court, and, in the same breath, gave his hired tools an order to fall on and murder me. But, by all that is sacred, I will return the good intent; he shall never go alive from hence."

As he spoke, he sank fainting upon his seat,

and the stranger ran to him, and busied himself in binding up his wound. But Margaret interfered:—"How is this, my lord duke? may he not be an emissary of that vile bigot, the —— ?"

The stranger nodded assent, and replied, as if struck with a new thought: "It had been no bad plan, had I, after receiving your messenger, accompanied him back, and at once found admittance, in order to confront the faithless wretch. But here, I see, we have found a surer arm, and a stronger motive for vengeance."

"Learn to know me!" continued the stranger, addressing the officer in his real character: "I am the uncle of Prince Erich, and your own," he added, in a more gentle and confidential manner: "I have no reason any longer to preserve terms with my degenerate relative, nor, I think, have you. Let us unite, if it so please you, and seek redress for our wrongs!"

De la Montée was rejoiced to find an opportunity of thus immediately wreaking his vengeance upon the supposed hypocrisy and savage cruelty of the prince, and entered heartily into all the duke's views. He sealed his adhesion by an oath of secrecy; and it was agreed not to make any attempt at that moment, but to withdraw with the first streak of dawn, and mature their plans in private.

CHAPTER IX.

"The wrath of Heaven tears the veil from crime, and shames the bloody doers."

HELEN had retired at a late hour, and left the margravine more composed. Affected by the tears and the extreme suffering of the princess, though at a loss for the cause, she had sympathized warmly in her sorrows, hung over her couch, and exhausted every source of relief in a gentle and faithful woman's nature to bestow. She had heard enough to know that De la Montée's life was in danger, and gave secret notice to Verena to put him upon his guard. Finally, it being past midnight, she had prepared to retire to rest in the chamber immediately adjoining that of the princess. After offering up her simple and pure vows to Heaven, and praying, as was her wont, for the welfare of the princess and her aunt,—for her own protection from evil, and the guidance of the good angel in all her ways,—the name of Leodegar,—her beloved Leodegar,—murmured on her lips, as with fervent voice, and uplifted palms, she

preferred her last and dearest prayer, that he might be shielded from harm. She had already sunk into the world of dreams. She now walked with Leodegar, in high communings with mysterious beings of another sphere,—now listening to the rich deep tones of his eloquent voice, as he interpreted the hidden wonders of nature, and the majestic attributes of nature's God. She thought she walked through green and sunny paths,—the scene of her early home; that Leodegar too was a child; that they sat where fadeless flowers were springing, and in the deep solitude of the woods and hills, listening to the wild birds' notes. Then, all at once, the scene changed,—they were joined by one in an angel's form: she gazed in his face, and they were the features of the margrave. He fixed his eye earnestly on Leodegar, and fled; the latter pursued, and abandoned her,—she dreamed, —for ever. Then it seemed as if she were suddenly transported with her friend Eberstein into a dark and desert land. They saw a fountain springing from the earth. "Let us drink from that fountain," said Eberstein, in a flattering tone to her companion, at the same time leaning over the water, and taking some in a golden cup.

"I will not drink," replied Helen, "for I mistrust you, Eberstein; it may be a charmed potion, which may bind me to you for ever."

She then thought Margaret burst into a wild laugh, and said, mockingly, "Hath not thy lover put this into thy head? Poor little dupe! thou hadst done better to have loved me, though both heart and bosom are become cold as stone, than Leodegar, who is not of this world. But if you

will not take the cup from my hand, you can take it from that of the water-spirit herself."

At these words she thought that her companion disappeared, and that the woman, seen in her father's dream, rose suddenly from the fountain, and stood before her startled sight.

"See, see, my child! I am ready for you.—Are you come," she cried, with a fearful laugh, "to redeem your father's word, who would not accept my pearls, neither my golden crown." Helen felt the cold hand of the water-spirit on her arm, chilling her heart to the core, and stealing with a benumbing influence over her frame. She struggled to get free; but the water-spirit only laughingly replied, "Nay, pretty maid, 'tis vain to contend with the spirit of the lake; come along, come!—I will show you my pretty house, and the wonders of my crystal reign!"

The nix took Helen upon her arm like a feather, and bore her swift as a whirlwind to the castle with the sea-tower in the mountain-hollow.

"Here it is I dwell," cried the spirit, pointing to a ruined wall; "I hate the tower by the sea, and the fish-pond,—for there my lord lies buried,—and have taken up my dwelling here.—Come, and fear not."

A door appeared to open, and both Helen and her unearthly conductor swept rapidly through it into a wide open space, like one of the largest of those old courts attached to the mighty castles of the days of chivalry. There were antique casements, doors and cornices; but windows and gates were alike solitary, and even the huge stone images had fallen from their resting places.

"Give heed now!" said the spirit, and pointed with her cold cloudy hand to the firmament high aloft, that seemed to become one mass of grey and yellow, as if growing heavier and heavier with its wild birth of storm, and fire, and hail. Then suddenly came a raging of the air,—a groaning of the earth; the ground opened, and the terrified Helen seemed to spring, from spot to spot, as it passed from beneath her, till she had no longer any footing. Still she seemed to sweep along, borne by the wild spirit of the waters, away through the moist, dim, and cool waste of air.

"Oh, how frightful!" murmured Helen, to her strange companion; but the latter, looking above, replied—"See there!"

What was Helen's terror, whose sight already sickened at the scenes around, to behold one more wildly fearful than the rest. A castle was in view; through every window, door and crevice, in the walls, loud, weltering waves, with caps of foam, with thunder and with storm, seemed to be leaping to engulf their prey. The surrounding scene became one mass of wild and roaring waves. They appeared to gather round them darker, and yet darker, threatening to swallow them in the mighty ocean-chaos that overwhelmed all nature in its strife. With a laugh of scorn the spirit threw Helen off, and plunged into the vasty deep; she was again seen to emerge from her shroud of black, hissing waters, and in that agony of approaching doom, the imagination of the tortured sleeper broke its fearful spell. Helen was, in fact, awoke by loud, repeated knockings at her chamber door. She sprung from her couch, panting, trembling

and exhausted, with excess of fear. The noise continued, and she heard Verena anxiously calling upon her name.

" I am here, Verena :—what is the matter ?—Come in, come in !" and she unfastened her door.

" Holy Jesus and his blessed mother !" cried the distracted Verena, " be our protection now ! We are lost,—all lost,—unhappy as we are !"

" Merciful Heavens !" exclaimed Helen, " speak ! is the margravine worse ?—dead ?"

" Far worse than that,—we are all doomed !"

As she spoke, the shock of an earthquake made the place tremble; the furniture in the rooms shook and fell on the floor. The affrighted girl dropped the lamp, and, rushing through the gallery, left Helen entranced in terror that rooted her to the spot. The horrors of her dream seemed to be realized, and a piercing cry of " Woe ! woe ! the castle is falling !—the waters are coming in !"—gave strange and wild confirmation to the worst. A pale, fitful beam of dawn, now gleamed through her chamber ; and Helen, hardly conscious of what she did, threw up the window, and, with the courage of despair, gazed forth. A hollow rushing sound met her ear, and her eye rested upon a dark, confused body of waters—swelling and falling—now rising over—now receding, for a moment, from what yet appeared the remaining dry, or green specks of land. One grey, misty, dead colour, enveloped earth and sky. The sea had left its bed,—not a streak of the boundary shores was visible ; — the lovely lake had overtopped its banks, and mingled with the mightier waves which had burst from the broken fountains of the ancient hills

and ocean-house of rest. Like one fascinated, she stood, the statue of wild, yet beautiful despair,—her eye rivetted upon the watery waste, till by a sudden impulse she flew, pale and breathless, from the window, to seek the princess, so that at least she might not die alone. She found the wretched margravine, half attired, weeping, calling on the name of her beloved son, as she sat wringing her hands, surrounded by her women and the domestics of the castle.

The warder now informed them of some of the particulars of the catastrophe. After several heavy shocks, the earth, he supposed, had sent forth its springs from the surrounding hills and mines simultaneously with the lake and the sea. The low plains round the castle, the towns, villages, and little hamlets, with the country far and near, were now become one flowing sea, while from every height poured down a cataract.

On the moist and chilly air, came, from every side, sounds of distress, tolling from tower and steeple, while successive discharges of fire-arms from isolated mansions, and the cottages among the mountains, gave mournful signals of the extent of the calamity. The margravine, terrified as she was, now ascended upon the leads of the mansion, attended by such of her household as possessed equal courage, and thence looked down upon a scene of which nothing can convey an idea but a sight of the dread reality itself.

She saw one wide-spread waste of waters, heaving and rolling with a sound like the distant thunder;—swelling and bounding, like some huge monster eager for its prey, against the foundations

of the surrounding edifices. In some parts, the ferry boats, and little skiffs, broke from their moorings, and were seen dashing idly over the foam; at times carried high aloft with the growing fury of the flood, at others as deep buried in its remorseless bosom.

The woods appeared to be torn from their ancient heights, and, with their vast floating trunks, borne, like horrid battering rams, against the walls and windows of cot and castle. The exterior walls of the margravine's mansion thus assailed, deeply planted as they were, gave way with a hideous crash, followed by some of the buildings in the court. Peril, in its most appalling shape, thus presented itself to the eyes of the despairing princess and her train; and a piercing shriek from the women announced that the crisis was near at hand. The paths towards the heights, and other defences of the castle, were already swept away by a tremendous chasm which opened in the ground, and formed a gulf for the hissing waves. On another side, the smooth road up the aclivity was changed into an abrupt and broken mass of precipice. Opposite to this, again, was beheld a scene, if possible, yet more marked with devastation. Numbers of the domestic animals,—the noble horses and faithful dogs, were heard uttering cries, the language of which could not be mistaken; many were swimming and struggling with the flood; and dead bodies of more,—men, horses, and other animals, rolling on the surface,—gave a climax of horror to the scene. Not a few were attempting to save themselves upon the floating fragments of the general ruin,—such as window-sashes, beams,

doors, and almost innumerable floating-trees, which the waters of the adjacent lake had swept from their long-held sylvan sanctuary in the surrounding parks.

The birds yet warbled to the dawn, as they nestled in the leafy tops of the trees and bushes, appearing above the flood ; the ring-doves still poured their sweet songs from their now invaded forest homes ; and to their stems, there clung the stag and wandering deer, uttering strangely plaintive cries. But they soon ceased to be heard, drowned in the roar of the wide overwhelming flood, from which alone the lofty antlers of the bolder stag were seen emerging, like some spreading tree of coral or wild plant of the seas.

From time to time the earth continued to heave with a groaning voice, while fresh springs poured from the neighbouring hills. Suddenly the subterranean noises ceased ; and the waves, which had appeared about to engulf the highest tower and pinnacle of the castle, seemed to pause in their destructive course,—but it was only for a moment. A mass of black clouds hung like a huge shroud over hill and valley,—dark, as if a sun-beam had never illumed the heavens, or the earth smiled in her green and flowery season beneath its bright blue canopy. A cold piercing rain thickened the oppressed air ; and at the wild, terrific aspect of all things around, the drops fell as thick and fast from the eyes of the woe-struck margravine and her lamenting train. Her own peculiar danger pressed less sadly upon her spirit than that of the afflicted and helpless people ; and she wept aloud.

Helen followed the example of her mistress, and

wildly gazed forth upon the terrors of the scene from the extreme edge of the veranda. But she could not weep; and with the same look of calm despair, and eyes as dry, Mademoiselle Eberstein stood at her side. There was an expression of painful anxiety in her features: her hand was quickly and tremblingly directed to her side, as if feeling for something at her girdle.

"When I am stretched in yon waste of waters," she muttered out, "this heart will chance be at rest. Yet,—patience!—first—and then!" Helen looked at her, and started with horror, as she remarked a smile of bitter mockery and triumph upon her features. She fixed the same hateful look upon Helen, and said, scoffingly: "Why so pale and sad, my dear? Where is your saint, who, with his prayers, can lay the storm and the flood? Where is Leodegar, thy friend,—thy chosen?"

Helen felt her blood grow chill, at hearing the secret of her heart thus profanely treated, but could make no reply: still the thought, that now pierced her for the first time like a sword, that Leodegar had perhaps fallen a sacrifice to the remorseless flood, blanched her cheek with a deadlier paleness; and, with a half-suppressed cry, her eye followed the direction in which Mademoiselle Eberstein pointed. It was even so; a black robe floated upon the waves. One long, deep sigh broke from Helen's bosom; and the name of Leodegar was on her lips; while others around called out: "It is the pastor of the village!" while the margravine appeared little less affected than Helen.

"Isidor!" lowly murmured from her lips, her bosom heaved, and her tears flowed afresh. Strug-

gling a moment with her feelings, she leaned upon Helen, and hastened back into her chamber, where she abandoned herself to the wildest grief.

"What I have lost," she cried, pouring her tears upon Helen's breast, "you, — you, my sweet and innocent child, can never conceive! Oh! let not the angel of yon bright sphere look down in anger! —Leave me not to hard-heartedness or to despair! Alas! Helen, if you only knew ——! I am so very wretched!—the unhappiest one upon the wide earth! And, oh!—my son!—how shall I learn if he yet live,—if this fearful calamity hath spared him! I would suffer all!—I would give my life but to know that the prince and Isidor are alive!—Isidor, whom I only now spurned from me in bitterness of spirit! Too surely he hath perished!—the waters have flown still swifter than his steed!" Her feelings here overpowered her; she covered her face with her hands, and wept. After a painful struggle, she again continued: "And you, my sweet child! who have scarcely yet welcomed life's glowing dawn,—you, too, my unhappy fate sweeps along with me to destruction! These firm-based walls must yield, must overwhelm us, ere help can arrive! No; not all thy youth and innocence, thy beauty, and thy goodness, can escape yon wild and angry flood!"

Helen, at this moment, called to mind the margrave, who had suddenly surprised her in the park. She had not ventured, however, to communicate the circumstance to the princess, as the idea of his being on the spot would have redoubled her terrors. The reflection that he was safe seemed the only consolation left to her; while Helen, on the other hand,

was dismayed at the idea of what might be the fate of Leodegar.

"Yes!" continued the princess, "brief and lovely thy young life, with all its glowing hopes, must soon be extinguished in these raging waters! It is a fate which reproaches me, — which wrings my heart! Only yesterday,—as I had prepared to tell you,—fortune appeared to smile upon our warmest wishes. I heard from your aunt that the marshal himself, delighted with your society, and, unable longer to resist your attractions, had determined to offer you his hand. Wealthy, agreeable,—all you could desire,—what a happy lot had been yours!—but now, alas!—"

Helen started at this intimation; and the next instant the words of Margaret Eberstein occurred to her mind: "They will sell you to a court minion;" and she replied, full of alarm and confusion; "The idea of relinquishing happiness like that, would never add a moment's bitterness, princess, to my fate. Never could I become the marshal's wife, even were it possible to shun the peril which threatens to overwhelm us."

"Never, my love?"

"Do not upbraid me, gracious madam. I must first love the person to whom I yield my hand; and I am sure the marshal is not the man."

"That is mere affectation; that comes of the prim notions you imbibed in the cloister," replied the margravine, in a tone of displeasure; "it matters not — are you willing, however, to take the veil?"

Helen shook her head; and the margravine continued yet more warmly:

"Or would you rather live an old maid?—or, perhaps, you have already a lover?"

Helen blushed "rosy-red," cast down her eyes, and spoke not.

"Ah! that blush betrays you, young lady," cried the princess, fixing her piercing eye on Helen's; "who is it?—one of my courtiers? Confess!—tell me, instantly!"

Helen, completely thrown off her guard, by the suddenness and heat of the princess's manner, stammered out, she knew not what; and in broken accents the name of Leodegar fluttered upon her lips. She almost shrieked as it was uttered, raising her timid, anxious glance to the face of the princess, who stood over her in the attitude of one hearing the confession of a culprit, while an expression of the utmost astonishment, mingled with displeasure, marked her countenance.

"Is it so?" exclaimed the margravine, in an ironical and contemptuous tone, as she turned away.

The impending danger, however,—for a moment lost sight of in this discussion, in which the dignity of the princess was merged in the passion of the woman,—now resumed its sway. A fearful cry rose from the court below. The princess and Helen both hastened towards the window. A rude, ill-constructed raft, was seen slowly moving from the window of the ground-floor, rowed by some bold hands, making use of poles, in place of oars, to impel it forward. It was directed to the lime-tree, on the branches of which the black dress before alluded to, was suspended.

"Whither now, good people?" cried the margravine, in a tone of distraction.

"To secure the body of the pastor," was the reply of these rude missioners on their pious office.

Others then called out, "It is not the priest's body,—neither his gown; it is something which floated from the pond, driven here by the flood."

The rowers pressed on, and soon reached the spot.

The castle porteress, meantime, entered, and whispered in the margravine's ear: "The prisoner of the tower, your highness, is nowhere to be seen!"

"Wretch!" cried the margravine aloud, "your carelessness has caused this."

"No, your highness!" replied the woman, mildly. "Heaven is my witness, that I obeyed your orders in every respect. Last evening I left the three upper doors unclosed, and both the lower ones well fastened; but the latter were burst open by the earthquake."

"Poor Isaura!" murmured the princess to herself. "Just as I was on the point of giving thee liberty, hast thou perhaps rushed into destruction!" Turning to the porteress she continued: "Let the lady instantly be sought throughout the castle. If she escaped this morning, she must yet be somewhere near, either living or dead."

"The flood gains head!" was shouted from the ground-floor; and instantly a simultaneous rush was made from the bottom of the mansion towards the upper stories.

"The cry was caught and re-echoed through

the passages, as the servitors and commonalty approached. They formed a procession, consisting of women sobbing and tearing their hair: while others joined in a melancholy hymn. At their head appeared the chaplain, with the holy relics rescued from the engulfed chapel, and Leodegar, rendered hardly recognizable by the pale and careworn expression of his sunken features, barefooted, with a crucifix in his hand, and his hair hanging over his forehead like an insane person. Helen's feelings were agitated to the uttermost, as she viewed the mournful procession passing slowly along to the room of the margravine.

The princess selected her new oratory in order to receive the supplicant and penitent throng, and where she might unite her own prayers with those of her household. A numerous company, intent on a similar object, joined her from another door, including the servants and huntsmen of the castle, at whose head was the forester Steinsatz, and whose countenance and language indicated their perplexity and distress. Necessity had here confounded all distinction of ranks, and annihilated the distance between the ruler and the ruled.

"What want you here?" inquired the princess, with looks expressive of dissatisfaction.

"Please your highness," replied Steinsatz, deeply agitated, and wet through and dripping, "a secretly perpetrated and most atrocious crime has been brought to light—a crime which has justly provoked the wrath of Heaven, and has brought down upon us this fearful visitation."

"See what we found, as we were dragging for the village pastor," exclaimed another party, bringing

forward a box covered with a black and half-decayed cloth, which having been torn away, with the cover, that was mouldy and falling to pieces, they discovered to the astonished gaze of the margravine, the skeleton of an infant, wrapped up in a sort of linen cloth.

"In Heaven's name!" exclaimed the princess, beside herself, and scarcely able to stand, with the support of the trembling Helen, "where did you find these?"

"The box floated to the shore from the pool," was the reply. "Heaven itself has brought the foul deed to light, and the curse falls upon us, as the crime has been perpetrated in this house. The guiltless babe has been murdered here; the cloth that was used as a winding sheet, has the red armorial bearings of the family, which have not been effaced by exposure to the wet."

The margravine, with a start, recognized the marks.

The housekeeper became suddenly as white as snow, and, on lifting up the black wrapper, which had been a woman's petticoat, exclaimed: "Preserve us! this garment belonged to my Verena!"

The penitential train now entered, singing, and mechanically grouped themselves around the melancholy spectacle; a shriek proceeded from the women, and Verena was observed to fall, senseless, to the ground.

"O, the guilty wretch! A token from Heaven, of its truth and justice! May we be delivered from evil!" was re-echoed in wild and varied tones from the assembled crowd.

Steinsatz, in a state of distraction, sprang to his wife, exclaiming, "Verena! Verena! awake, and tell us whether you are indeed the murderess?"

"My daughter was ever virtuous and good," the housekeeper exclaimed, "This offspring of iniquity was never hers. She is innocent, most gracious princess; she is innocent!"

Verena opened her eyes, and her countenance was that of despair, as she again beheld the remains of the infant's body.

"Unhappy woman!" shouted Steinsatz, in her ear; "who threw that box and child into the pool?"

"I did," replied Verena, weeping. At this confession an universal shudder ran through the crowd, and the forester started back from his wife with every symptom of horror.

"Is this garment yours, Verena?" demanded others, holding up the black envelope.

"It is mine!" was the reply. Twenty voices at once opened on the self-accuser: "Drag her out to the balcony, and fling her into the river, that we may be saved," was the cry.

The dread of death inspired Verena with strength to exclaim; "I am not guilty of the child's death! It is not mine!"

"Believe her not!" was the exclamation of several among the crowd. The forester tore his hair, and the priest held up the host to Verena, who still persisted in her innocence.

"By your hopes of heaven!" he solemnly said; "tell the truth."

"I have told it," replied Verena, quickly.

"If you are not the mother and murderess, who is she?"

Verena was about to reply, when her gaze met the host in the hands of the priest, and she sobbed out, relapsing into grief:—"I dare not; alas! I dare not speak! I am innocent, but was compelled to swear on the altar ——."

"A mere evasion," muttered the furious multitude around, among whom the women were the loudest: "She is guilty, and we are suffering on her account,—to the river with her!"

"What! without a trial!" demanded the princess, stepping forward in a state of agitation.

"Where is the judge, please your highness?" replied the ringleader of the fanatical mob: "In our present situation there must be no delay. The water is rising every minute; and we provoke our doom by delaying this sacrifice, which would rescue us from danger!"

The multitude made another attempt to lay hold of the shrieking Verena; when, on a sudden, Leodegar, who had hitherto stood aloof, in an antechamber, made his appearance amidst the agitated throng, in a state of high and fearless excitement, and in a voice, in which decision and authority spoke, he said:

"Let the woman alone! Leave her,—I tell you! She is guiltless! I pledge myself for her innocence of the horrid crime which you have laid to her charge!"

While some remained silent and abashed, others laughed at him, others sarcastically asked: "Are you a prophet? Tell us then, how this happened

to the child. If you are a messenger from God, command the waters to fall; for destruction is at hand, not a boat approaches for our deliverance!"

"Poor timid creatures!" exclaimed Leodegar, proudly and energetically: "If God in his wisdom delays to remove his judgments from you, think you, by shedding innocent blood, to hasten your deliverance? I am no angel from Heaven; but from certain signs which a close observation of a similar visitation enables me to recognise, I perceive that in twenty-four hours the waters will fall; and if, within that time the woman's innocence be not as clear as the sun at noon-day, I will die in her stead."

The margravine said, in a decisive tone, "Leodegar has spoken wisely, and I will take his pledge. Let Verena be conducted to a well guarded room, and left alone with her husband: it may be, that his influence may prevail upon her to name the perpetrator of the crime of which she declares herself innocent."

This mandate was obeyed, but with no great symptoms of satisfaction. Verena was led away weeping, followed by the forester, who was irritated and silent. The housekeeper departed, wringing her hands in an agony of despair. The margravine ordered the remains of the infant to be placed in one of the vaults of the castle, until the mystery should be cleared up.

The princess and the chaplain remained alone. Leodegar, who was again lost in his own reflections, was about to follow the departing crowd, when Helen arrested him, and anxiously asked:

"Have you no words of comfort to bestow on me in this hour of peril?"

Leodegar, with a bitter smile, answered: "Ask a reply from the living; death is silent, and I am dying, Helen!"

"So are we all, my friend; yet I depend on your consoling aid, in this season of trial."

"You will live, Helen! I only must go; and it is time. My existence now only resembles a melancholy twilight. Yesterday it was gloomy as night; and it must end,—it must end,—as speedily as possible. I pray, however, that I may be spared until I see *one*, whose life is in my hands."

"You make me shudder," replied Helen; "who is that one?"

"The margrave. He must,—you say so yourself,—be in the neighbourhood. I trust, nay, I am certain, that the wars have not reached him; that he will be the first to arrive, by a quick-sailing boat, to relieve his beloved mother. Then will I disclose to him the dangers that impend over his head; and if it be necessary, sacrifice the few remaining moments of my life to his safety. Then shall he know, that so far from having been his enemy, I have been his friend."

Helen was startled at these words, although she said nothing. Leodegar gazed at her for some moments, earnestly and enthusiastically; and, seizing both her hands, thus addressed her:

"Pious and excellent young woman! yesterday my ear was refreshed by your words. Far be it from me to interpret them in their most extensive sense, but they fell on my parched bosom as the

balsamic dew. They gave me the blessed assurance that I was not a perfect stranger upon the earth; that a being, the purest I ever approached, took a kindly interest in my welfare. I thank you. But, alas! I am unworthy of you. But time wears, and it may be that I shall never see you more; and if the hand of death, which I feel is upon me, should snatch me away ere I find the prince, — tell him, that the sword of the murderer hangs over his head! — Adrian, the margravine's confessor, has shamefully betrayed both his prince and his mistress, and leagued himself with the ferocious uncle, the duke. I, — dost thou hear? — I, in a moment of hot zeal and indignation against the enemies of my religion and its ministers, was prevailed upon to engage to become the young prince's assassin. But God has touched my heart, and checked me in the path of vice. I have cast away the dagger; but another less scrupulous instrument than myself will be found to do the deed of blood, when my defection from the duke's cause shall have been discovered. Therefore, in the contingency to which I have alluded, fail not to warn the prince."

"Leodegar! is it possible?" exclaimed Helen, turning pale at this confession.

"The danger, I repeat, is not yet over," continued Leodegar: "the deed which I have forsworn, hundreds are ready to perpetrate. It is well for the margrave that he is not going to his mines; snares are there laid for him. But not less will be his danger should he come here, as he must do, and be unwarned of it. The duke is not far off. His hirelings are on the watch along the boundaries of

the two states; and the demon-spirit of the whole conspiracy is Eberstein!"

"Good Heavens! Margaret!" exclaimed Helen, in a state of terrified amazement: "and I, perhaps, have been an unconscious instrument in promoting her criminal designs! O, Leodegar! whom I fear, and shun, and yet revere! What a suspicion arises, on a sudden, in my mind!—to you only I confide it: — the horrible spectacle lately witnessed — Verena's silence — Margaret's command to repeat the Lord's Prayer when at the pool.—Good Heavens! is it possible that she — ?"

"Stop!" exclaimed Leodegar; "let not thy pure lips disclose the deed. I also have the same suspicion, and I am now on the way to see the monster, to rend her heart, to tear off the veil that shrouds this mystery, and to deliver the innocent Where is she?"

"She has withdrawn to her room, under pretence of indisposition," replied Helen. "Leodegar! perhaps by this good action you may atone for your criminal intention!"

"Alas!" continued Leodegar, in a tone of deep distress:—"believe me, in the grave only shall I find peace."

So saying, he departed, with his head drooping on his breast. Helen, who followed him with her eyes, wiped away a tear, and exclaimed to herself, "Alas! what weak and frail mortals are the best of us. Truly, there is no surer guide to crime than the blind zeal which forgets the means in the end. And yet, erring, as he has been, my love for him will never cease but with my life!"

Leodegar remained standing for some time at

the door, and, beckoning to Helen, whispered to her, as she hesitatingly approached him: "I saw tears in your eyes, and will confide a jewel, which I found to-day in the tumult of the morning, to the safe keeping of your sympathy;—a maiden, who has escaped from prison by the aid of Heaven itself. On my meeting her by chance, she threw herself on my protection. But my protection will not long avail her. Take, therefore, this feeble one, and say, when I am dead, to the princess, that Isaura, (for such is her name), and the papers that will be found upon me, are my parting gift to her. That you will not betray me *before* my death, I have every pledge that your faith can give me. Come, then, along with me a few steps, and I will deliver over to your care this unfortunate creature!"

Inspired with a strong interest for the object of Leodegar's solicitude, Helen followed him in silence until he reached the door of a small apartment, which he flung open, and presented her to Isaura; and, after commending the latter to her affectionate care and protection, he left them together.

Leodegar now set out, with a lighter heart, to search for Margaret Eberstein. That part of the castle through which he passed, was almost deserted. He heard at a distance the sound of the pumps at work in the lower parts of the castle, the cries of those who were resisting the advances of the flood, the explosion of the fire-arms that were discharged from the balconies, and the monotonous warnings of the tower clock. Leodegar was undecided through which part of the numerous ramifications of the castle to proceed, when Dandowich, the ugly Dalmatian, met him; evidently

in a state of distress. When he saw Leodegar, he ran up to him, and taking him by the hand, he said with much earnestness: " Dear father, or doctor, or whatever you may be, deliver me—rescue me, from a state of the greatest embarrassment! You, formerly, by your prayers, restored the dead to life; restore now, by your prayers, a sick person to health. A distinguished individual is now lying ill in my room, to the left, up the flight of stairs. If he cannot be persuaded that he is the dupe of his distracted imagination—it is all over with him. He fancies he has seen the departed spirit of a girl he formerly loved, and to have heard her voice, addressing him in threats; he is in a state of distraction, and cannot quit his bed. Help him and counsel him, but maintain the strictest secrecy. I must now go to the margravine, and hope on my return to find him, whom I left in a state of fever, restored to some degree of tranquillity. Leodegar, not comprehending the whole affair, but believing himself to be acting in his vocation, was about to follow in the direction indicated, when, on a sudden, two men started forth with naked swords from behind the dusty tapestry of a partition, and detained him:—they were the Duke, Erich's uncle, and De la Montée, with his arm in a sling, and rage depicted on his countenance.

" Stop!" exclaimed the Duke, with a wild look, which oftentimes struck terror into the boldest; " Do you know me?"

" Yes, your highness."

" Is it true, as I have been informed by Eberstein, to whom I sent you, as to one of the confederacy—

with sign and watch-word—is it true you have a desire to break the oath which you so solemnly swore?"

"An oath to commit murder? Should such be the command of Heaven, it must be fulfilled."

"That was spoken rationally. You are now ready—this instant—to be our leader in the deed?"

"What deed, my Lord Duke?"

"Concerning the sick person—the margrave—of whom Dandowich spoke to you."

"The margrave!"

"The conflict of the elements, and the sickness under which that worthless prince is now suffering, favour our plans. This youth has a piece of treachery to avenge; and I am desirous to put an end to the impious tyranny of the margrave, whose people shall enjoy happiness under the sway of my son."

"My Lord Duke! Surely, you would not attempt the life of your nephew, under his present circumstances, confined to a bed of sickness!"

"Does Heaven spare the sick?" was the Duke's rejoinder.

"Yet consider, on the other hand, my Lord Duke, that surrounded as he is by the retainers of the margravine, the attempt, at the present juncture, is fraught with no common peril."

"The extremity of danger is the very circumstance that impels me forward to complete my task. Fate has thrown me in its net, but I will tear it in pieces. To a fanatical woman and the whimpering of her attendants I will oppose vigour and defiance. One half of the servants are on my side; the other half I will keep in check with

my good sword, and the threatened approach of many hundreds of my soldiers, from the other side of the river. Death, therefore, to the enemy of the church! Forward! lead us on, Leodegar! and give him absolution in death!" Leodegar, with his arms crossed on his breast, and his head bent down, listened and considered. At last lifting up his eyes, he said, boldly, "Be it so, sirs! let us proceed!"

They set out, and the Duke secretly signified his wish to De la Montée, that after the margrave was dispatched, Leodegar should share his fate. De la Montée smiled a malicious assent, overjoyed at the prospect of annihilating his enemy, and of getting possession of the papers, from which he anticipated such advantage.

CHAPTER X.

Our history carries us back again to the margravine, who was sitting alone in her oratory; whither, after the exciting scenes of the last few hours, she had returned, in order to tranquillize her mind, and to prepare it for a trial scarcely less severe than that to which she had already been exposed. She had despatched a messenger to summon the attendance of Margaret Eberstein, who, at length, entered the apartment.

The countenance of the latter, pale as it was on ordinary occasions, had assumed an appearance of ghastliness, and betrayed the recent workings of deep and powerful passion. Her manner, however, was calm and cold; and she approached her mistress with the self-possession which usually characterized her, and waited for the margravine's commands.

"Margaret Eberstein," said the princess, in a tone of marked solemnity, "you are no stranger to the fearful event which, more terrible even than the tempest and the flood, has spread consternation and gloom throughout the castle!—A horrible

crime has been perpetrated among us, of which the individual now imprisoned on suspicion of having committed it, declares herself to be innocent. Margaret Eberstein!" continued the margravine, with increasing emphasis, "if it be in your power to throw any light upon this dreadful transaction, I conjure you, as you would rescue innocence from the punishment due to the guilty, speak, ere it be too late!"

"May I first be permitted to inquire," was Margaret's reply, "why upon me, of all others of the household, a suspicion of a participation in the crime,—for such your adjuration implies,—has arisen in your highness's mind?"

"Eberstein!" responded the princess, "I will not waste time by allowing you room for evasion; but will save you the added guilt of prevarication by at once telling you that Verena, who, until within these few hours, obstinately persisted in concealing the author of the crime which she disclaimed, has, through the solicitations of her husband, and the fear of an ignominious death, been induced to confess."

"And," rejoined Margaret, quickly, "has she dared to charge me with having murdered the little innocent, whose bones a special interposition of Providence has wrested from their sepulchre, and brought again to the light of day? Speak!" added Eberstein, with a quickness and almost peremptoriness of manner, so little in accordance with her general bearing towards her mistress; "has she presumed to proclaim me a murderess?"

"Not in direct terms," was the margravine's reply; "but by implication."

"As how?" inquired Margaret.

"She declares you to be the mother of the infant;—that she received it dead from your hands; and by your directions sunk it in the lake," returned the margravine. "What answer do you make to her allegation?"

"That she has spoken the truth!" said the other firmly.

"How!" exclaimed the princess, in a tone of evident surprise and horror, which, despite of Verena's confession, she could not but feel, at hearing one of whom she had so long entertained so exalted an opinion, avowing, with a calmness bordering on effrontery, herself to be the mother of the child. "Do I hear aright?" continued the margravine; "do you thus boldly acknowledge the shame and the guilt of such a deed?"

"The shame," said Eberstein, "but not the guilt!"

"Can they be separated?" inquired the margravine. "By what refined casuistry can you show that?"

"By no casuistry, my honoured mistress," said Margaret, "but by a plain story, if you will deign to hear it."

"Nay, have you not," asked the princess, "by acknowledging yourself the mother of the child, proclaimed yourself a wanton?"

"I am neither a wanton nor a murderess," rejoined Margaret, firmly.

"Are you then married?" was the next question.

"No," was the simple rejoinder.

"You speak in riddles," replied the princess; "I pray you explain; for I protest to you that

your answers involve contradictions which my poor powers are utterly incompetent to reconcile."

"Listen, then," said Eberstein;" but first promise me, on your word as a princess, that if I succeed in clearing myself of the fearful charges which have been brought against me, and, on the contrary, prove that I have been more sinned against than sinning, you will protect me against my oppressor, if you cannot redress my wrongs."

The margravine gave a solemn promise to the effect required, when Margaret Eberstein continued:

"It has not, perhaps, escaped your highness's recollection that when I had first the honour of a place about your person, the glow of health was upon a cheek which sorrow has long since blanched. I was then young, and innocent, and happy. The world, to one who had seen nothing of the vice and the wickedness which deform it, was then a world of beauty!—a paradise ere the tempter came to beguile and to betray!

"There was one being with whom my duties in your highness's court brought me into frequent contact; and who, very shortly after our acquaintance, began to distinguish me by marks of no ordinary regard. When I tell you that nature had conferred on him a beauty of form, and a grace of manner, which placed him at an immeasurable distance from all those of his own sex whom I had ever seen; and that education had done all to perfect what nature had begun, you will not wonder that a simple, unsuspecting, and romantic girl should feel flattered by the attentions of so accomplished a person. I will not weary you by the history of the progress of

my affection for this man,—suffice it to say, that it was such as woman only feels—absorbing and devoted. Of the sincerity and ardour with which he returned that love, I fancied I perceived unequivocal proofs.

"Notwithstanding, however, the strength of my attachment, I for many months resisted his repeated and earnest solicitations for my consent to a private union. There were many circumstances which tended to make me averse to it, and I implored him to wait until a more favourable position of our affairs should sanction a public avowal of our attachment. Yielding at last to his arguments, I consented to become his bride, and the ceremony was privately performed by a person whom my lover had represented to me as an old and faithful friend of his house.

"Of our success in concealing the circumstance from the knowledge of yourself and your court, you have been a witness. The dread of discovery, I could not but feel was amply compensated to me, by the consciousness of possessing the affections of the being whom I had almost worshipped. Shortly after I became his, circumstances called him away for some months; but for many weeks I continued to receive frequent letters, breathing in every line sentiments of undiminished and unalienable affection. On a sudden, and I need not paint to you the consternation consequent on the discovery, a change took place in the tone of his letters: they were shorter, less ardent in their expressions of attachment, and became gradually less frequent, until at last total silence ensued.

"I did not fail, as you will well believe, at first to implore for an explanation of his altered style; and after my entreaties had been answered by subterfuge and evasion, my remonstrances, it will well be imagined, were attended with as little success.

"In the mean time, concealment became every day more difficult on my part; and you will remember that I solicited, on the score of ill health, to be permitted to sojourn for a while at this your summer residence. Although I did not leave the apartments which I here occupied, I could not, of course, dispense with attendance, and was therefore reluctantly compelled to make a confidante of Verena, who was appointed to wait on me. I had had reason to be satisfied of her discretion and fidelity, which I further secured by presents, and bound her by the most solemn oaths not to betray me.

"It happened — and now I bless Heaven most fervently that it was so — that the infant to which I gave birth was not destined to breathe the polluted air of this wicked world. It was born a corpse! To conceal it was my next care, and to Verena I confided the task of consigning it to a tomb, beyond, as I hoped, the discovery of man. It was coffined, and with a weight sufficient to sink it, dropped into the lake, from which the late convulsion of nature has disentombed it.

"As soon as I found myself sufficiently recovered to hold a pen, I made another effort to reclaim the affections of my faithless lover. I wrote to him, and told him of my suffering and my sorrows, and of the bitter anguish which his coldness and neglect had inflicted on my heart.

"To that appeal he did not vouchsafe a word. Stung to the quick by this superaddition of contempt to injury, I wrote again, and threatened him with the instant proclamation of our marriage. To that letter I did receive a reply, and that reply contained, in a few cold and sarcastic lines, the astounding intelligence that our union was not a valid one—that the service had been read over us by an impostor, whom a minion of his own had bribed to assume the disguise and office of a priest. His letter concluded with an intimation, that if I breathed a syllable of the fraud that had been practised upon me, he would, in revenge, proclaim me as the murderess of my child, of the birth and clandestine burial of which my own letters furnished him with proofs.

"Shame, however, supplied a more powerful motive for my silence than I should have acknowledged in his threats. The evil passions of my nature were roused by the treachery of this accomplished villain, and I burned for vengeance, resolving to purchase it at all hazards; nor was my animosity in any degree allayed by the subsequent discovery that I had been neglected for a newer, if not fairer object of attraction; and thus jealousy added to the fierceness of my revenge. From that hour I became another being, and times have been when the conflict of the feelings, which my injuries called up, has overturned the empire of reason in my brain.

"For many of the facts which I have related to you," said Margaret in conclusion, "I can produce proofs in the letters of my betrayer; and for the rest, I shall be borne out by the evidence of Verena,

whom I release from her conditional oath of secrecy, and with whom, as you well know, I have not had the means of communication or collusion, since the discovery of the infant's remains. Judge you, therefore, most generous princess, if, instead of meriting your indignation, I be not rather an object for your pity and protection."

"And you shall have them," rejoined the margravine, "and justice likewise, if it be to be had in Germany; but tell me first, who is the cold-blooded and perjured villain, who has dared to perpetrate such an outrage on one who was under our especial guardianship. Is he known to us?"

"Known — and yet, not known," was the reply.

"What mean you?" inquired the other quickly. "Is he of our court?"

"Of your *blood*," rejoined Eberstein, in a tone which thrilled the margravine to the heart.

"Ha!" exclaimed the princess, as the truth dawned upon her—"speak—keep me not in suspense; but tell me, who is he?"

"The prince, your son," was the stern answer of the unhappy girl.

A shriek of horror and surprise was the only reply which the margravine could give to this astounding annunciation. The fearful workings of her countenance betrayed the feelings to which she was unable to give language, and she fell back in her chair utterly paralysed by her emotions.

After a pause, during which the margravine in some degree recovered from the shock, Margaret continued:

"Subsequently to the discovery of my betrayer's

desertion of me for another, accident disclosed to me that a female was detained a prisoner in the apartment immediately above that which I occupied in this residence after the birth of my child. Curiosity, or it may be a better feeling, induced me to attempt to open a communication with the captive, which, after repeated failures, I at last succeeded in accomplishing. In the course of our correspondence I gleaned the particulars of her history; and you will judge of the surprise I felt on learning that she too had been an object of the prince's love, if it deserve the name. I lost not a moment in displaying to the confiding girl the character of the man to whom she had plighted her troth, and from whom, it appeared, she had received a written engagement, which bound him to make her his bride.

"In the first bitterness of her indignation, at the discovery of his baseness, she resolved on sending back to him this document, and renouncing him for ever. On my representing to her, however, that her retention of the paper, the existence of which was known to yourself, would effectually prevent his forming a matrimonial contract with another, she was induced to forego her first impulse, and to resist both the threats and the promises which were made, in order to induce her to resign it.

"However unappeasable was my anger at the prince's desertion of me for another, this explanation with Isaura immediately turned away my wrath from the object of his new attachment; and I derived no ordinary degree of gratification from the conviction that I had succeeded in obliterating from her bosom every particle of affection for a man,

whom she had once believed to be all that was pure and noble in human nature."

"You saw the prince," was the margravine's inquiry, "on the occasion of his last visit; may I ask if you had any conversation with him on the subject of your wrongs?"

"Yes," was the reply, "I had; and the interview was a brief and a bitter one; one of dark menaces on his part, and of stern defiance on mine; for, as if to aggravate his baseness, he had the effrontery to affect to believe me guilty of the murder of my child, and repeated the threat held out in his letter, of inflicting the punishment due to such a crime, in the event of my betraying him."

Great, however, as was her horror at the discovery of her son's baseness, it did not overcome the feeling of parental affection, which is one of those strong instincts so wisely planted in the human heart. Margaret had spoken of revenge, and the margravine knew too much of the world not to fear the desperation of a wronged and insulted woman. To avert the consequences of it, therefore, from one whom she loved above all the world, she assured Margaret that she deeply sympathized in her sorrows, and felt indignant at her wrongs: and concluded by assuring the injured girl, that if maternal authority could avail aught, her son should be brought to a just sense of his conduct.

"He has paid its penalty already," was Margaret's reply.

"How!" inquired the margravine, with a look which betrayed that fear was not altogether unmingled with her surprise.

"This castle is in the power of his worst enemy, his uncle," said Eberstein; "while the prince is lying sick upon his bed, unable to move a finger for the recovery of his lost margravate."

"Margaret," exclaimed the margravine "you rave! The last advices from my son described him as in perfect health, at the seat of his government, surrounded by a faithful phalanx, against which the efforts of his ambitious uncle would be unavailing."

"My advices," rejoined Margaret, with somewhat of sarcasm in her tone, "are then of later date than your highness's. The prince, your son, is at this moment in your own castle; sick, as I before told you, and attended by such nurses as I scarcely think your highness would select for him. In a word, my faithless lover is betrayed, and Margaret Eberstein is revenged!"

"Fiend!" exclaimed the princess, "would nothing but his blood sate your vengeance?"

"Nay," was Margaret's reply, "his life is safe—traitor as he has proved to me, I would not that he be cut off in the midst of his sins, and therefore stipulated, as the condition of my co-operation in the plot against his margravate, that his life should be respected."

"Fool!" vociferated the margravine, "you know not what you have done!—you know not the sanguinary character of the man to whom you have betrayed him: he is one whom oaths bind not, and who would slay the priest at his very altar: but I will rush to save or perish with him!"

"Alas!" said Margaret, whose distrust in the pledge which had been solemnly given to her for

the life of the prince was thus fearfully excited, "the door by which I entered was closed, and fastened after me, and every avenue is guarded by the minions of the Duke."

The triumph of revenge is proverbially short-lived. Indeed, it is much to be questioned, whether, in a case where revenge has issued in the infliction of an irreparable injury, by the wronged on the offender, remorse does not follow immediately upon the gratification of the vindictive feeling. When, however, the blow has fallen heavier than was contemplated by the avenger, and instead of wounding has destroyed its object, the bitterness of the remorse is doubled; and thus, Margaret, who contemplated only the humiliation of the author of her wrongs, was overwhelmed with horror and grief, when she found that she had been an active participator in a conspiracy which was likely to issue in his destruction.

To describe the agony of Margaret and the margravine, would be as difficult as to determine which of them was the more distracted at the thought, that even at that moment the sword was at the throat of the prince. The princess mingled her lamentations over the fate of her son with reproaches of her who had assisted in betraying him; reproaches to which Margaret could reply only by tears.

CHAPTER XI.

Leaving the margravine and her companion, for the present, in their sorrow, we must now change the scene to the chamber in which was the margrave, who had been suddenly attacked by disease, the consequence of exposure in the forest, and had been carried to an apartment in a remote part of the castle, without the knowledge of his mother. In order, however, to the more effectual concealment of his having there taken up his abode, it became necessary for him to make a confidant of the Dalmatian, who had especial reasons of his own for falling in with the prince's wishes, and keeping the circumstance from the knowledge of the margravine.

The complaint by which the margrave had been attacked, assumed a more serious character than was at first apprehended; and in the course of a few hours he found himself unable to rise from his bed. Like most men who have lived for many years in the enjoyment of uninterrupted health, he became alarmed at the approach of disease. When, however, he read in the countenances of his atten-

dants, their apprehension for the issue, conscience, which had slumbered so long, began to awake in his bosom.

Then, for the first time, did he look back upon a life which had been spent in the gratification of every selfish and profligate propensity; and it will readily be imagined that the retrospect afforded him little consolation. He heard in the thunder which was pealing around him the voice of that dread Being, whose existence he had virtually denied, and it sounded in his ears like the denunciation of wrath to come. The forked lightnings, which flashed before his casement, were as the flaming characters on the wall of the Babylonian palace, which told him that he had been weighed in the balance and found wanting.

Among the horrible phantoms with which conscience had peopled his couch, the most terrible was the figure of the betrayed Margaret, with her dead infant in her arms; and he felt that by his cruel treatment of the one he had been the murderer of the other.

While he was thus lying a prey to disease, and the terrible anticipations of the doom which his crimes were about to pluck down upon his guilty soul, one of his attendants entered with a hurried step and agitated manner, and informed him that the duke, his uncle, had, by means of treachery, obtained admission into the castle, with a body of retainers sufficiently strong to overcome the opposition which the household of the margravine could make.

Among the faults of the margrave, and they were manifold and great, cowardice was not num-

bered; and, enfeebled as he was by disease, and haunted by remorse, the spirit of a long line of ancestors beamed in his eye as he listened to the recital of his uncle's unprincipled attempt. He raised himself in his bed, which he made an effort to leave, but falling back exhausted by the ineffectual exertion, he exclaimed, in a faint voice: "Alas! my sovereignty will be taken from me, while I am not able to strike a blow in its defence; and he who, could I have lifted my sword, would not have dared to stand before me, will now find me an easy and unresisting prey."

The words had scarcely passed his lips, when the sound of heavy footsteps were heard in the corridor into which the apartment opened, and as they were rapidly approaching, the attendant who had brought the intelligence of the duke's having gained possession of the castle, fled by another exit, leaving the prince to his fate.

The margrave was not long kept in suspense as to the errand of the approaching visitors. The door was flung rudely open, and discovered the persons of the Duke, De la Montée, and Leodegar, the first two being armed to the teeth, while the enthusiast grasped a dagger.

De la Montée, whom accident, or desire to prove his zeal for his new master, had placed in advance of the others, was somewhat, to use a nautical phrase, taken aback at the sight of the prince, wasted by disease, and resembling rather the denizen of a Necropolis, than an inhabitant of this "breathing world." The shock, or haply compunction for the deed in which he had pledged himself to assist, stayed his step.

The feeling, however, was but momentary; and with a grim smile of recognition he advanced with his bared weapon to the bed-side of the sick man, followed closely by the Duke and Leodegar. The prince eyed De la Montée with a fixed and earnest gaze, but helpless as he seemed, and opposed by such fearful odds, he uttered not a word of supplication for mercy.

"Thus," exclaimed the soldier, "thus does De la Montée avenge himself for the indignities which he has endured from your haughty house. Die, tyrant! and wash out the stain upon my honour with your blood!"

As he spoke these words, he lifted his weapon against the apparently defenceless prince; but ere the blow could descend, the hand of the latter, which had been concealed beneath a fold of the covering of his couch, was suddenly raised,—the report of a pistol rang through the vaulted chamber, and, stricken to the brain, De la Montée sank lifeless and bleeding on the floor.

This unexpected movement on the part of the prince, and the astounding result, for a moment paralysed the Duke; but Leodegar, although as little prepared for such an event, was endowed with a presence of mind which rarely, even on the most trying occasions, deserted him. Throwing himself upon the prince's uncle, he exclaimed, "My Lord Duke, you are my prisoner!" and the next moment the duke found himself weaponless in the grasp of Leodegar, whose superior strength enabled him to retain the advantage which the suddenness of his assault had given him over his captive.

"My Lord Duke," continued Leodegar, placing

his dagger to the throat of the other, "I would not willingly shed the blood of my bitterest enemy; and although death is the traitor's doom, I would not send into the presence of his God one who is so unfit, so unprepared to stand at his dread tribunal. Yet if life have any value to you, you will not resist my determination to secure the prince from any personal attack from your lordship."

With a force which the duke could not, had he been so disposed, effectually resist, the enthusiast dragged him along the corridor, and through a narrow passage which diverged from it, until he brought him to a small cell, which had been used in former times as a place of imprisonment for refractory vassals. It was secured by a strong oaken door, studded with nails, and having a small grating, through which alone the light found access.

Having effectually secured his prisoner by the external fastenings of the cell, Leodegar was departing, on his return to the chamber of the prince, but was arrested by the voice of the duke, who addressed him through the grating of the door, and said:

"Sir priest, or by whatever other title it may please you to be called, flatter not yourself that the prince will escape the just punishment of his crimes, although your interference has suspended his doom for a brief season. My retainers, reinforced, as they will shortly be, by troops now on their march, will prove the stronger party in this castle, and there is not one of them who would hesitate to remove with his dagger the obstacle which the prince's existence presents to my designs;

and think not that your merits will be lost sight of in the reckoning which is at hand. Prisoner though I now be, I shall soon have my hand upon your throat, and then beware the vengeance which your impertinence and treachery have provoked !"

"Your words are sharp, my lord duke," was the calm reply of the other; "but unless they can sever the massy bars by which you are secured, I see not that they can avail you. Farewell, my lord. I go to rally the retainers of the margravine and her son against the banditti which treachery has admitted within these walls."

"It may quicken your steps, young sir," said the duke, "to know that your worshipped Helen has found safety from the terrors of the assault in the protection of her old admirer, the lieutenant of my guards, Ludolf Spitz, the fame of whose gallantry in love and war has doubtless reached your reverend ears."

The bare possibility of Helen's being in the power of a man from whose odious attentions she had fled to the protection which her aunt had offered her at the court of the margravine, was sufficient to hasten the steps of Leodegar to her relief. As he returned through the corridor, however, he could not pass the door of the sick prince without ascertaining the effect which the late exciting scene had produced upon his previously debilitated frame.

He found the margrave in a state of almost complete exhaustion; scarcely, indeed, exhibiting any signs of life. Leodegar, who, a constant visitor of the sick, was usually provided with a restorative

drew from his vest a small phial containing an elixir, which, without a moment's delay, he forced between the colourless lips of the prince.

It was some time before the beneficial effects of the application were apparent. As soon as the sick man was restored to consciousness, Leodegar said: "My prince, I must leave you for a while, but it will be only to prove my devotion to the service of your house. In the mean time, bear a good heart; the person of the duke your uncle is in my power; and, if there be faith in man, we shall yet turn the tide against his followers, who have gained a temporary triumph over yours. In this chamber you will be far from the scene of the strife, but, if need be, I will defend the passage, by which alone your enemies can reach you, with my life. Farewell!"

On his return to the theatre of the contest, Leodegar found that some skirmishing had taken place between the assailants and defenders, in the court-yard of the castle, and that the latter had been more successful. The captain of the household troops appeared to have shaken off the indolence and lethargy which, in peaceful times, had distinguished him, and proved himself to have no small share of dogged, sturdy courage. In two or three charges he had completely driven the enemy to the gates of the castle, where, however, they had contrived to fortify themselves in a position, whence the noble captain was unable to dislodge them. They had, in fact, with some of the furniture of the castle, formed a sort of breast-work, behind which they were able to pour a destructive fire upon the re-

tainers of the margravine, without experiencing much annoyance from their opponents.

The duke's party evinced no disposition to quit a post, in which they were not only secure from being dislodged, but which would enable them to admit a reinforcement from the main body of their troops, of whose arrival they were in momentary expectation; and, thus strengthened, they would have no difficulty in gaining the entire mastery of the castle, and expelling or making captive its defenders.

Leodegar, at the imminent peril of his life, reconnoitred the position of the enemy, with a view of ascertaining if the duke's lieutenant was among them. When, however, he found that the command of the party had been deputed to a subordinate officer, the horrible certainty that Helen was not merely in the power, but in the immediate custody of Ludolf Spitz, occurred to his mind.

To detach any of the followers of the captain of the household troops, to aid in rescuing Helen from the clutches of the duke's lieutenant, would be to withdraw the check which they contrived to keep upon their enemies at the gate, and to enable them to commence their search for their master, and, what was more to be apprehended, to place the prince in their power.

To attempt the rescue of Helen by his single arm was therefore all that was left to him; and on this forlorn hope he snatched a torch from one of the retainers of the margravine, and hastened to explore his way through the dark and winding passages of the castle, to the apartment in which he

knew Helen had sought refuge. In taking the direct way to it, he would have exposed himself to the fire of the duke's men, and therefore it was not without difficulty that he at last gained the door of her apartment, on approaching which he heard the voice of Helen in a tone of expostulatory supplication, and the scornful laugh with which the lieutenant replied to her entreaties for his forbearance.

Leodegar tried the door, which, to his infinite horror and disappointment, he found was secured on the inside. With the desperation of a madman he flung himself against it, without any other effect, however, than the provocation of a fierce inquiry from the interior, of who it was who presumed to intrude upon the privacy of the occupants.

"Ruffian!" vociferated the enthusiast, completely thrown off his guard by the violence of his resentment and his apprehensions for Helen, "ruffian! it is I—Leodegar!"

"Then," was the reply, "the saint must wait the leisure of the sinner, who will not be disturbed in his adorations at the shrine of the virgin."

"O Leodegar, good Leodegar," was the exclamation of another voice, half choked by hysterical sobs, "I am in the power of a ferocious and remorseless man! Save me! save me!"

The taunt of the one, and the supplication of the other, had worked the enthusiast into such a state of frenzy, that he became utterly indifferent to all consequences to himself: and he had reason for dreading the worst, being armed with only a dagger, while his antagonist, he had cause to know, was armed to the teeth.

Leodegar made another and equally ineffectual

assault upon the door, by rushing on it, from the extremity of the narrow passage which led to it, with all his force. The attempt was answered by a taunt of defiance from the lieutenant, and a shriek of agony from Helen.

The enthusiast paused for a moment, when a thought suddenly occurring to him, he retreated to the end of the passage, rushed through the door of a room which served as a receptacle for lumber, and in an instant afterward re-issued with an old battle-axe, with which he renewed his attack, with a vigour inspired by desperation. His third blow split the door from the top to the bottom, but at the same time cost him his weapon, which was broken off short at the head. The application, however, of his knee to the nearly divided panel, enabled him entirely to separate it, and force his way into the apartment.

The horror will more readily be conceived than portrayed which he experienced at beholding Helen, with dishevelled locks, like a dove in the talons of a vulture, struggling to disengage herself from the loathsome and polluting grasp of Spitz.

"Barbarian, forbear!" was the exclamation of Leodegar, as, with the dagger in one hand and the blazing torch in the other, he rushed upon the lieutenant.

The latter, with one hand retaining a firm hold upon Helen, drew a pistol from his belt with the other, and pointing it at the enthusiast, dared him to advance another step.

"Madman!" was the address of the dark-visaged Spitz, "I have blood enough upon this hand, without dyeing it in yours; and therefore would

not take your life, unless you provoke me further; but if you make another movement to reclaim the prize which the fortune of war has thrown into my possession, I will speedily afford the world an opportunity of learning how small a quantity of brains is requisite to make a priest."

"Merciful Heaven!" exclaimed the distracted girl, vainly endeavouring to extricate herself from the powerful grasp of the ruffian lieutenant; "rather let me die, than abandon me to be dishonoured by the fiend in human shape to whose power it hath been thy pleasure to deliver me."

"Helen," said the enthusiast, "thy prayer hath been heard—death is preferable to dishonour!—Since I may not die for thee, I will die with thee."

As Leodegar spoke these words, he stamped with his heel firmly on a particular board, when a portion of the oak flooring of the apartment receding into the wall, left a chasm between the enthusiast, and Spitz and his captive, of about five feet square.

"There," resumed Leodegar, pointing with the dagger into the chasm, "there is the powder magazine of the castle. The honour of that maiden is dearer to me than my life, or even hers. Unhand her, this instant," he continued, raising the torch, the ignited pitch from which was dropping on the floor, "or, by the power that reigns above, I will refer our cause to the tribunal of eternal justice!"

The ruffian, who had hitherto treated the enthusiast with the loftiest scorn, now exhibited symptoms of quailing. His antagonist was standing upon the verge of the chasm, and had Spitz discharged his pistol with effect, Leodegar would have

fallen into the abyss, with the torch in his grasp, and thus the destruction of the three must have inevitably ensued.

The lieutenant glanced from the chasm to the countenance of the enthusiast, in which he read, in characters which could not be mistaken, the stern determination of a desperate man, to whom life was as dust in the balance, compared with the honour of the object of his devoted regard.

Spitz, not relinquishing, although somewhat relaxing his hold of Helen, advanced towards the chasm, and, having no disposition to be dismissed at so short a warning from a world in which he had placed his happiness, wisely sounded a parley.

Helen, taking advantage of the distraction of her captor's attention, made a sudden effort which released her from his grasp, when, darting past Leodegar, she gained the passage, and speedily disappeared in the gloom.

The movement was equally unexpected by Leodegar and his antagonist, who stood gazing at each other for a few seconds, without exchanging a word, when a loud knocking at the outer gate of the castle furnished a new and apparently absorbing subject of interest to both.

" Sir priest," said Spitz, who was the first to break the silence, " listen to those sounds! They are the knell of your hopes. They announce the arrival of a reinforcement which will not only enable us to master all the present defenders of the castle, but effectually to prevent their escape. For the present, farewell! Make the most of the fair damsel whom you have succeeded for a moment in res-

cuing from my power, as I shall speedily reclaim her!"

As he spoke he hurried away, to put himself at the head of his party, in order to receive the long-expected reinforcement, which, as has already been stated, were waiting for the subsiding of the waters, in order to join their comrades, who, with the duke, had treacherously obtained admittance to the castle.

With an alacrity not surpassed by his enemy, Leodegar hastened by another passage to join the little band of the margravine's household troops, who, with the gallant captain at their head, still maintained their position, but were anxiously looking towards the gates, which their opponents were preparing to throw open to the newly arrived reinforcement.

As the gates moved heavily upon their massive hinges, a cry of exultation arose from the followers of the duke; upon which those of the margravine gave symptoms of retreating; when Leodegar, rushing to their head, implored them to be firm, and await the issue, like men devoted to their sovereign prince.

The words of remonstrance and entreaty had scarcely passed his lips, when a sudden confusion was observed in the ranks of their opponents, who retreated in great disorder from the gates, exclaiming, "Treachery! treachery! the enemy are upon us!"

The unexpected retreat of those who, but a few moments before, were shouting in anticipated triumph over the defenders of the little fortress, may be explained in few words.

Leodegar, it seems, had been early aware of the duke's design of dethroning the reigning prince, Erich, and of establishing himself in the margravine's castle, as a preliminary step, and there awaiting the coming up of a large detachment of his forces.

The enthusiast contrived to send an intimation of the duke's intentions to the commander of the prince's troops, who was then at the seat of government, and who, immediately on receiving the intelligence, put himself at the head of a select body of soldiers, and, by forced marches, succeeded in intercepting the progress of the duke's reinforcement. A general engagement was the consequence, and, after an obstinate and protracted struggle, victory declared for the banners of the margravine, whose force was, in point of fact, the more numerous and better disciplined of the two.

Having succeeded in routing the ducal army, the prince's guards advanced at once to the relief of their besieged master; and being in possession, through the information obtained and communicated by the enthusiast, of the signal concerted between the duke and his auxiliary force, upon which they were to be admitted by their commander into the castle, the margrave's forces were enabled, under cover of the night, thus to turn the tables upon their enemies, whose sentinels could not, by reason of the darkness, distinguish between their friends and foes.

The truth, it will easily be imagined, was not long concealed from the gallant little band who had so bravely disputed with the duke's retainers possession of the castle. The troops of the prince

were soon recognised, when the cry of "Long live prince Erich! Down with the duke!" made the vaulted passages of the ancient building resound.

The duke's men, unable to penetrate the phalanx of enemies who pressed upon them from without, sought present safety by dispersing themselves through the narrow and winding passages which intersected the castle, in the hope that when the first storm of the assault was over, they might obtain quarter upon easier terms.

The lieutenant of the duke's guards, Ludolf Spitz, had, in his earlier days, been in the service of the margrave, and had thus added to his other sins against the prince, the crime of desertion. Aware, probably, that under such circumstances he was not likely to be included in any concession of quarter to the duke's followers, or, which is equally feasible, stung by rage at losing the prize which had once, he thought, been securely his, and stimulated by revenge against the immediate author of his disappointment, he made a rush upon the handful of men commanded by the captain of the margravine's household troops, cut his way up to Leodegar, when he drew his pistol and fired.

The enthusiast staggered a few paces, and then fell, weltering in his blood, which gushed in torrents from the wound.

"I am revenged!" exclaimed the lieutenant, while a fiendish expression of triumph illumined for a moment his dark features. The words were the last he was destined to utter. His short-lived triumph was terminated by a bullet from a trooper of

the margravine, which laid him a corpse by the side of his recent victim.

Having no longer any resistance to fear, the first care of the victorious party was to collect the wounded, among whom the case of the enthusiast was the most formidable. He was conveyed to an apartment, and experienced that attention and sympathy which his heroic efforts so justly commanded from the friends of the margrave.

This melancholy duty performed, the next object of the conquerors was to secure the vanquished, who were scattered all over the castle, and to lodge them in the dungeons beneath.

When tranquillity was in some degree established, the captain of the household troops of the margravine proceeded to release his mistress from her temporary prison, and to inform her of the defeat of her assailants.

The margravine, however, had drawn a different conclusion from the silence which had succeeded the uproar of the assault, and when she heard the exterior fastenings of the oratory door withdrawn, was prepared, instead of being welcomed by her friends, to surrender herself to the enemies of herself and her son.

The feelings of agreeable surprise which she experienced on being hailed by her faithful captain, as again mistress of her castle, were powerfully mitigated by the melancholy intelligence that victory had been purchased by the blood, and, it was feared, the life, of that mysterious being who had gained so strong a hold upon her regard.

If she had before admired his character, how greatly was her admiration increased by the knowledge of what he had dared and done for the preservation of her son, whom, with all his faults, she loved with an affection of which a doting mother alone is susceptible.

CHAPTER XII.

The attention of the margravine was divided between the prince and his preserver. The former was very slowly mending, but his ultimate recovery was confidently predicted by his medical attendant.

The case of the enthusiast assumed a more serious complexion, the extent of the wound being such as for some time to baffle all attempts of the surgeon to stop the effusion of blood, and when that was effected, the extremely exhausted state in which he was left, rendered it probable that his constitution would, in the end, yield to the shock it had sustained.

His symptoms, instead of improving, became daily more alarming; and although, from an apprehension of increasing the febrile action which had been set up, the surgeon, and those in attendance on the wounded man, refrained from apprising him of his perilous situation, he appeared fully to comprehend the nature of his case.

On one occasion, after the surgeon had examined his wound, the enthusiast requested that all the

other persons in attendance would quit the room, when, addressing the medical man, he said:

"I appreciate the feeling which would conceal from me that I am hovering on the brink of the grave,—but it is in vain. I know that I am dying, and all I ask of you is, that you will let me know how long, in your estimation, I am likely to linger."

The surgeon hesitated, and made the common-place observation, that while there was life there was hope; and that in cases equally desperate, he had known the constitution to rally, and finally triumph.

"Nay," was the rejoinder of the enthusiast, "do not flatter, for you cannot deceive me. The hand of death is upon me; but I would snatch a few hours from the grave, for I have much to do, and therefore implore of you to tell me honestly how long you think it will be before the struggle is at an end?"

Thus adjured, the other laid aside all reserve, and told his patient that he could not answer for his surviving twenty-four hours.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Leodegar, somewhat startled at the intimation that death was so near at hand; "the time is short, but being so, I must not waste a moment of it. Send instantly to the margravine, and implore her, as she would soothe the parting moments cf a dying man, to come hither without delay!"

It will readily be imagined that the margravine was not long in obeying the summons; and, accordingly, in a few moments, she was by the couch of the enthusiast.

The surgeon left them together, but the margravine requested that he would remain in an adjoining apartment, in order that he might afford his assistance in the event of the patient being overcome by the task which he had imposed on himself.

The enthusiast, when the first ebullitions of the margravine's grief at the knowledge that the awful crisis was approaching, had subsided, addressed her in a low, but calm and distinct voice, and said:

"I beseech your highness to grant me your pardon for conduct, which, if you did not impute it to the ravings of insanity, must have assumed in your eyes a more offensive character. A mystery hangs over my birth, which you alone can explain, and I feel that I shall depart more tranquilly from this troublous world if that mystery, which it has been the desire of my life to penetrate, be cleared up. Know you aught of a being who was once called Isidor?"

At the mention of the name, a change passed over the countenance of the margravine, and she became violently agitated, but at length faltered out, "What, in the name of the blessed Virgin, has prompted that question?"

"I am that Isidor!" rejoined the enthusiast.

"What!" exclaimed the margravine, with a shriek of surprise; "do my eyes deceive me—or can you—nay, I will not believe that you would attempt to impose on me a false story at such a season as this."

"Nay," rejoined Leodegar, "falsehood, which was ever a stranger to these lips, shall not pollute them now. I am, indeed, that Isidor; and you

—dare I give utterance to the words—are my mother!"

"Merciful powers!" screamed the margravine, "what suggested that horrible thought?"

"Behold," said the enthusiast, drawing from beneath his pillow a casket, from which he took a portrait, and exhibiting to the astonished margravine an almost perfect likeness of herself, added, "that, as these documents inform me, was my mother—look on it, and it will furnish you with an explanation of my conduct towards you."

"Nay then," returned the margravine, "you are, indeed, the long-lost, deeply-mourned, and anxiously-sought Isidor; but do I live to discover you only at the moment when you are to be snatched from my arms. Spirit of my sainted sister, look down upon your son!"

"Am not I your son?" inquired Leodegar, with a look in which anxiety and distrust were mingled "—O, speak!—sport not with a dying man!"

"No," was the reply, "not my son; but the son of my twin-sister, between whom and myself there existed so remarkable a similitude, that it was only when we were together that one could be distinguished from the other: but compose yourself, dear Isidor, and you shall hear her melancholy history, although it involve my own condemnation."

After a pause, during which both parties had in a great degree recovered from the excitement into which the mutual surprise had thrown them, the margravine commenced her narrative, and said:

"While my sister Magdalene and myself were

as yet but verging upon womanhood, there appeared at the court, at which we were then accounted among its most distinguished ornaments, a young Italian officer, in the Austrian service, whose name was Boncampo. He had acquired considerable reputation in his profession, and in addition to the advantages which that gave him in the eyes of the young ladies of the court, he had the recommendations of a very handsome person and most accomplished mind.

" From some accidental circumstance, the nature of which I cannot now call to mind, an intimacy was formed between my father and this officer, which issued in the latter becoming a frequent guest at our table. It will readily be imagined, that two girls like ourselves, would not long remain insensible to the attractions of such a person. In short, we ,were both deeply enamoured of him, and the extreme kindness and attention with which he ever deported himself towards us, doubtless tended to encourage our passion, although, as it afterwards proved, my more fortunate sister became the mistress of his affections.

" I cannot describe to you the mingled disappointment and anger with which the discovery of my sister's success inspired me. In the first bitter paroxysm of my feelings, I had no thought but revenge against my rival for her good fortune, and against her lover for his neglect of my fancied superior claims to his regard. I accordingly instantly denounced him to my father, who, a man of large fortune and high descent, I well knew would not endure for a moment the thought

of his daughter's alliance with a soldier of fortune, with no name but that which he had acquired in the field.

"Alas !" continued the margravine, "my revenge was too fatally accomplished. My father, as I had rightly judged, was enraged at what he deemed an indignity offered to his family; and in the first impulse of his indignation sought out Boncampo, taxed him with a breach of hospitality, and challenged him to determine their quarrel by the sword.

"For a long time, the generous and gallant soldier bore, with unexampled patience, the taunts and reproaches of one, whose connection with the object of his love rendered him almost sacred in his eyes. At last, stung by the apparent apathy of Boncampo, my father passed upon him the unendurable insult of a blow, and instantly drew his sword.

"Boncampo, in defence of his life, was compelled also to draw; but determined, at all hazards, not to aim a blow at the bosom of Magdalene's parent, he confined himself to parrying the thrusts of his antagonist, who, unhappily, was the better swordsman of the two. The result was, that my father pressing hard upon Boncampo, succeeded in striking down his guard; and following up his advantage, passed his sword through the body of his gallant adversary, who fell lifeless at his feet."

At this part of her narrative, the margravine was so overpowered by the bitterness of her feelings that she was unable to proceed; while Isidor, on his part, exhibited scarcely less emotion.

"I was not," pursued the margravine, "natu-

rally cruel or revengeful, and had a brief space for reflection intervened between the discovery of Boncampo's attachment for Magdalene, and my meeting with my father, I should have hesitated ere I had provoked his indignation against the lovers. Indeed, I had scarcely made the communication to him before I repented of what I had done. Judge, therefore, of my feelings, when I heard of the fatal consequences of my rash revenge. Much as I had injured, and had reason to dread seeing my sister, I could not abandon her at such a crisis. I hastened to her, and in all the bitterness of late remorse, flung myself at her feet, and acknowledged myself the cause of the calamity beneath which her spirit had been crushed. But oh! gracious Heavens! how great was the added anguish of my feelings, when I learned from her lips that she had been privately married to Boncampo several weeks before I discovered their attachment."

"Horrible!" groaned Isidor, shocked at the dreadful recital.

"I merit your reproaches, Isidor," rejoined the margravine, "and seek not to extenuate my crime. As the circumstances of the marriage could not long be concealed from my father, if Magdalene remained under his roof, I prevailed upon him, when, having sated his revenge, his heart relented towards his offending daughter, to allow us to retire to a villa which he possessed in Italy, until the matter, that had created no little sensation, should have blown over.

"I need not express to you the gratification I experienced at having gained this important point,

and I lost no time in availing myself of the advantage it afforded me in concealing my heart-broken sister's situation. It was in that villa—nay, start not, Isidor—that you were born."

Another groan from Isidor, proclaimed the deep and agonizing interest which he felt in the narration of his mother's calamities.

" By taking the precaution of secluding your mother from the observation of the domestics in general," said the margravine, resuming her story, " and by a liberal bribe to the only female in the establishment, who was necessarily cognizant of your birth, I effectually succeeded in concealing the whole transaction from the knowledge of my father, who died in ignorance of it. As soon as circumstances would admit of it, I contrived to send you, then an unconscious infant, into Germany, where you were committed to the care of the faithful Burchard, to whom I also confided the portrait and the documents which you have exhibited to me.

" On the death of my father, my first care was to make inquiry after you, when I discovered to my infinite dismay and disappointment, that Burchard was dead and that you were not to be found."

" But what," inquired Isidor, eagerly, " became of my hapless mother?"

" She returned with me to our father, and after two years had elapsed, was addressed by a nobleman, highly distinguished at court—a descendant of one of the first families in the state, and the inheritor of boundless wealth. He solicited the hand of my sister from my father, who, his ambition

being highly gratified by the prospect of such an alliance, instantly gave his consent, and without deigning to consult Magdalene's sentiments on the occasion, or else taking it for granted that so advantageous an offer could not but be as agreeable to her as it was to him, immediately busied himself in preparation for the marriage.

"Magdalene's heart was in the grave with her husband, and the idea of a second marriage was abhorrent to her; but my father's commands admitted not of entreaty or remonstrance, and there was nothing left for her but to accord a tacit consent to his wishes.

"Her destined husband was a man of high honour, and of a most noble and generous mind; and on my suggestion, Magdalene confided to him the secret of her former marriage with Boncampo. So deeply was the count enamoured of my sister, that he not only declared that he loved her the more for the candour which had prompted the disclosure, and the confidence which she had displayed in his honour, but kept the secret inviolably until the day of his death."

"And my mother?" asked Isidor, gasping almost for breath with the anxiety with which he awaited an answer—"does she yet live?"

"Alas! no," was the margravine's reply: "she died a few years after her marriage with the count."

"Then, welcome death!" was the almost exulting exclamation of Isidor;—"welcome the grave, since it is the entrance to that blessed region where I shall be united to the dear author of my being, never to part;" and he sunk back upon his

pillow, and, to all appearance, had taken his departure for that better world in which the union he desired, would take place.

Some restoratives, however, being promptly administered, Isidor recovered his consciousness, which the margravine perceiving, cast herself upon her knees by the side of the couch, and exclaimed :

" But Isidor, can you forgive me for the cruel part I acted, in causing the death of your noble, your gallant father? And O! if repentance, bitter, deep, daily, hourly repentance, can purchase my pardon from you, it should be mine. Never have I ceased to impute to myself the guilt of his murder—a crime of which I have wearied Heaven with petitions for forgiveness.

" Fastings, and mortifications, and prayers, we are taught by our holy church, avail with God ; and Isidor, let them not plead in vain with man. O bless me with your forgiveness, Isidor, before death roll its shadows between us, and I see you no more !"

" As Heaven is my witness," said Isidor, slowly and solemnly, " I do forgive you from the depth of my soul."

" Bless you, bless you, for those words, my Isidor !" exclaimed the margravine ; " there spoke my sainted sister, and my bosom now knows a feeling of peace, to which it has for years been a stranger. Bless you, my generous, my noble Isidor !"

The margravine took occasion to explain to her newly discovered nephew, that she was quite aware that the tongue of busy slander had whispered that

she was his mother, and that she knew that the prince her son was not sceptical on the subject. She stated, however, that much as the existence of such a rumour had mortified and pained her, she respected the oath of secrecy which she had taken to her sister, more than the opinion of a misjudging and censorious world; and that not even to disabuse the mind of her son would she break her vow.

The margravine added, that the explanation which under the circumstances she had given to Isidor himself, so far from being an infraction of her pledge to her unhappy sister, was in strict accordance with the dying injunction of the latter, who conjured her to find out her son if possible, and to make him acquainted with the particulars of his birth, should he not have already discovered a clue to it by means of the portrait and papers, to which reference has been made in this narrative.

The margravine also stated, in explanation of the expressions of deep and bitter remorse which had escaped her in the chapel, when Isidor, then in the character of Leodegar, suddenly discovered himself,—that independently of the melancholy fate of Boncampo, whose blood she had been the means of shedding, the affection which she had cherished for him in his life time survived him. That, accordingly, when, from ambitious views, she had accepted the hand of the late margrave, her heart passed not with it, and, therefore, she conceived that she had been virtually guilty of an infraction of her nuptial vow, or rather in making that vow she had perjured herself.

By the time that the margravine had finished her

narrative and explanation, the continued state of excitement in which Isidor had been kept, induced symptoms which rendered it imperative that he should remain undisturbed for the rest of the day. Accordingly, the margravine, giving place to the surgeon, quitted the apartment, and left her nephew to his repose.

CHAPTER XIII.

Early on the following day the margravine was summoned to the chamber of Isidor, who, on her entrance, expressed himself very anxious to communicate some particulars of his life to which she was a stranger. He added, that his anxiety on this point was greatly heightened by the conviction that his earthly sojourn was drawing rapidly to a close, and he was desirous that the example furnished by his history should not be lost.

"My recollections of the pursuits and propensities of my childhood," said he, commencing his narrative, "are not very vivid. I know that Burchardt was very indulgent, and suffered me to follow the bent of my inclinations, which, as far as I can remember, tended to solitary wanderings into the country by which we were surrounded.

"It is to this circumstance that I am disposed to attribute the enthusiasm and love of romance which have led me into so many errors — errors which have been fatal to my happiness, and well nigh to my hopes of heaven!

"The same disposition distinguished me at col-

lege, where I soon acquired the reputation of being, what in truth I was,—a visionary. I had walked abroad into the wild haunts of nature,—I had almost worshipped her in her various forms of hill and valley—flood and field; and I mistook the rapturous admiration of the works of the Creator for an ardent piety towards their Author.

"The more strongly I became possessed with this idea, the more I shut myself up from my fellows, and deemed that I was set apart for some high and holy purpose of the Almighty. The creature of impulse, I was carried away by the suggestions of a fiery temperament, which I deemed to be nothing short of inspiration; and I at last persuaded myself into the belief that my prayers had the miraculous power of healing the sick.

"The eccentricity of my conduct, to give it the mildest designation, soon attracted the notice of the dean, your highness's spiritual adviser, who shortly afterwards sent for me to his presence. The character of the dean cannot, in some of its prominent features, be unknown to you. I would not willingly speak of him in a manner which would give you pain, but hovering, as I am, upon the verge of the tomb, I dare not use other than the language of truth.

"He is a man of whose sincerity in the cause of the church to which he belongs no person who really knows him can doubt. His zeal, however, is of that fiery character which often outruns, not only discretion, but justice, and is too apt blindly to overlook the means in eagerness for the attainment of the end. I believe that he would not

hesitate to sacrifice the dearest ties of humanity to his zeal for the church.

"As is ever the case, his fanaticism was mixed up with no small degree of superstition; and he was weak enough to believe what I had the impious presumption to assert — the efficacy of my prayers in recovering the sick; and when the malady under which he was lately so nearly sinking, attacked him, he hesitated not to implore my intercession, which I was too ready to attempt.

"The prayers of the righteous, we read, avail much; and far be it from me to doubt the warrant of scripture—but I was not righteous. I was polluted by fierce passions, I was inflated with an overweening vanity, which made any attempt to turn aside the chastisement of the Almighty from my fellow creatures, the most sinful presumption.

"The dean's convalescence followed my prayers, although it was not the result of them, and my reputation, backed as it was by the credit of my distinguished patron, spread wide and far. He rejoiced to find in me a congenial mind, and a ready instrument for his furious and bigoted designs against all whom he deemed the foes of the church.

"It happened that, shortly after I took up my abode with him, some measures adopted by the prince, your son, in which the privileges of the church in his dominions were held to be infringed, drew down upon him the heavy indignation of the dean, who, as you well know, remonstrated in no mild terms with his highness on the subject. You also know the tone in which those remonstrances were met and replied to; and if you were as closely

acquainted with the character of his reverence as myself, you would also know that contempt of his authority is an offence which he would be the last to forgive."

"Pardon me, my dear Isidor," said the margravine, here interrupting him; "I think you judge his reverence harshly. He was ever a friend to our house, and has often manifested his affection for my son, notwithstanding his irregularities, which none can deplore more than I do."

"Of his affection for your family, and for your son in particular, judge you by the sequel," continued Isidor. "To bring the prince to reason, by the strong hand, the dean felt to be impossible; but he did not, on that account, renounce his designs of vengeance. To kindle a zeal as destructive, if not as holy as his own, was not very difficult in a bosom of such inflammable stuff as was mine; I was, in fact, a brand to his hand; and had he commissioned me to assassinate the emperor on his throne, I should not have hesitated to make the attempt. Having premised this, I shall probably not startle you when I state that the real object of my mission from his reverence to your court was the destruction of the margrave. So powerfully was my bigoted zeal inflamed by the arguments and persuasions of the dean, that had I happened to encounter the prince before I was introduced to your presence, I should have attempted his life; and, as personal considerations would not have influenced me, probably with success.

"Happily for him, for yourself, and my own soul," pursued Isidor, "I was first brought in contact with your highness, when the startling resem-

blance between your features and the portrait of her who the documents assured me was my mother, checked me in my design. Every hour passed in your presence tended to strengthen my conviction that you were that long-sought being; and although our connection was yet involved in a mystery to which I had no clue, I began to falter in my project, and paused ere I plunged my dagger in the heart of one so closely allied to me. It is said that the tiger, checked in his first spring, will turn from his prey. It was thus with me; and every moment of cool reflection brought me to a closer contemplation of the wickedness of my design, which I finally abandoned.

"The good dean, however, it seemed, wished 'to make assurance doubly sure,' and therefore had not trusted the execution of his vengeance to my single arm. To his instigation, as well as assistance in the shape of money, you owe the late attack on the part of the duke, who had his reverence's instructions to communicate and co-operate with me in insuring the destruction of the prince.

"The duke, I have reason to think, suspected that my ardour had cooled during my sojourn in the vicinity of your court, and therefore kept a vigilant eye upon my movements, rendering it exceedingly difficult for me to withdraw my hand from the work which I had undertaken to perform. Resolved, however, as firmly on saving the prince, as I had previously been in accomplishing his destruction, I finally triumphed over every difficulty, and deem the life I am about to resign a cheap sacrifice to the safety of the margrave, and the consequent happiness of his mother."

"Generous, noble Isidor!" exclaimed the margravine, "dearly purchased is the life of my son, by the blood of my nephew—the child of my beloved Magdalene!"

"Grieve not over my untimely fate," was Isidor's reply; "I bless Heaven that my hand was stayed from an act of murder, and that my eyes have been opened to the delusion in which so great a portion of my short life was passed. May the deep and bitter repentance which has followed on the conviction of my errors, deliver my soul from the penalty which, but for Heaven's mercy, I must endure for them.

"There is one being," continued Isidor, "of whom I would wish to speak—the gentle Helen, whose beauty and simple graces inspired in me a passion which I feel has betrayed me into many extravagances altogether at variance with the character of holiness I assumed. I pray you to beseech her to forgive me for having trifled with affections so pure and innocent as were hers. I was not worthy of her love."

In reply to an inquiry of the margravine, who was desirous of knowing the grounds on which he ventured to pronounce Verena guiltless of the murder of the child, he stated that he had accidentally overheard a conversation between Margaret Eberstein and Verena, from which, while he gathered sufficient, as he thought, to justify him in warning Helen against confiding in the former, he ascertained that the infant was not born alive. He added, that it had been his intention, had matters proceeded to extremities, and Verena had been brought to trial for the supposed offence, to have come forward,

and, having stated the particulars of the interview, of which he had been an unseen witness, to challenge Margaret's evidence in corroboration of his assertions.

Leaving the chamber of the sick for awhile, we must return to some other of our *dramatis personæ*, who were in a situation scarcely more enviable than that of the invalids.

The duke, who had so securely calculated on taking possession of the castle, as its lord, was by no means satisfied with the very small portion of it, which it had pleased his victors to assign to him, and accordingly we find him chafing not a little under the deprivation of light, air, and exercise. Nor was the society of his fellow prisoner, the redoubtable Dandowich, calculated in any way to raise his spirits; inasmuch as that ex-functionary was himself in that deplorable state of despondency in which a reverse of fortune usually finds a coward.

Neither of them was at all comfortable, as to the probable issue of the adventure in which they had embarked; but Dandowich, who knew that justice, in his day and country at least, usually spares the greater, and hangs the meaner villain, had a pretty distinct view of the gallows constantly present to him.

The only person whom they were permitted to see, was the captain of the household guards, who enacted the part of gaoler-in-chief, and who brought their food to them morning and evening. It was on one of these occasions, that our worthy official lingered longer in the prison than was his wont, when the duke addressing him, said:

"Honest captain, this is a sorry dungeon to

which it has pleased his highness, your master, to consign us."

"I am sorry," was the reply, "that it does not suit you, particularly after the infinite pains you took to get into it."

"It is a cursed chance," rejoined the duke; "but the bravest of us must submit to the fortune of war."

"Under your grace's favour," said the captain, "a fellow detected in robbing a hen roost, might console himself after a like fashion; for to my humble judgment, there is little difference between such an attempt, and your unprovoked attack upon the castle, except that the latter is the larger building of the two, and your grace had a few more accomplices than usually abet the plunderers of geese and guinea-fowls."

"Nay, captain," returned the duke, in a conciliatory tone, "it is scarcely worthy of your valour, thus to jest with the misfortunes of your prisoner."

"Jest!" echoed the soldier, "I can assure your grace, that I was never more in earnest; although you will pardon me, my lord duke," he continued, belying his assertion, by breaking out into a most unseemly fit of laughter, "for yielding to a merry conceit that has glanced across me."

"The sounds of mirth," remarked the duke, "are not so often echoed by the vaulted roof of this dungeon, that I shoud seek to repress yóur merriment, although I would fain share in the joke, which, judging by the noise you make, must be a right excellent one."

"So excellent, my lord duke," responded the

captain, "that I will indulge your grace. I was thinking, that had the object of your, and my old friend Dandowich's attack, been the poultry-yard, your case would have been an amusing instance of persons coming to steal geese, and adding two to their number."

And here the valiant official burst into a renewed fit of laughter at his own clumsy conceit, somewhat to the annoyance of the duke and his fellow-prisoner, who may perhaps be pardoned for not entering so fully into the spirit of the joke.

Whatever were their feelings on the occasion, it was clear that it did not suit their present purpose to break squares with the captain; whom the duke again addressing, said in his most insinuating manner:

"My honest captain, methinks the post you hold about the person of a petty dowager, is scarcely worthy of your valour and pretensions. I marvel that you do not exchange it for an office of higher rank, and greater emolument, at the court of some of the neighbouring princes."

"Faith," replied the soldier; "your grace talks of promotion, as though it were only to be asked for to be had."

"As certainly it is, in your case," answered the duke.

"I would that your grace could make it clear to me," said the other, pricking up his ears, which were none of the shortest.

"For instance," pursued the duke, "I could name a prince who would give you a higher command, and double your present pay, at his own court."

"And pray who," inquired the captain, "is that sharp-sighted detecter, and liberal rewarder of merit?"

"No other than myself," rejoined the duke.

"Indeed! your grace is very kind, and I moreover honour you for your discernment," responded the soldier, to whose obtuse faculties the drift of the other was becoming apparent; "but I opine that certain preliminaries are necessary to the fulfilment of your generous intentions towards me. I see not well how you can make me a colonel of horse, under your present circumstances, seeing that it is by no means improbable that your grace's campaigns will terminate in this dungeon."

"I admit the difficulty," rejoined the duke, "although it does not present to me so formidable an aspect as you have given to it; but such as it is, it is in your power to remove it."

"As how?" asked the captain.

"By setting me at liberty," was the reply; "and earning my eternal gratitude, and —— "

"A halter!" said the soldier, finishing the sentence.

"Rest assured," pursued the duke, "that if you assist me to escape, and will accompany me to my dominions, your safety shall be my especial care."

"Pardon me, my lord duke," remarked the other, "if, after the specimen you have given of your ability to take care of your own, I hesitate in trusting to your providing for mine."

"Nay, but my good friend," urged the duke, "once within my territories, and you may defy the power of the margrave, your present master, to

drag you from the sanctuary which I can afford you. My troops are in point of discipline and appointments, if not in number, superior to his."

"Then your troops gave a very praiseworthy and heroic specimen of their forbearance," observed the captain, "when they allowed themselves to be so soundly thrashed by the force of the margrave which marched to the relief of the castle."

Here Dandowich, perceiving the little progress made by his fellow-captive, in overcoming the prudential scruples of their gaoler, took his part in the conversation, and said:

"Promotion, captain, is not in my power to bestow, but I can give you that which will stand in its stead, with one half of the world, and be held superior to it by the other. I can make you rich."

"Our wealth is pretty much upon a par, just now," remarked the impenetrable soldier.

"None know better than yourself," pursued the ex-cashier, "that my coffers are well lined."

"I see little use in having a full purse, if you cannot get your hand into it," responded the other, "which, I take it, is precisely your case at the present juncture."

"But my good captain," said Dandowich, "if you aid us to escape, we will take care to carry the bags with us."

"I imagine," said the veteran, "that their safety has already been cared for, by one who may fancy that he has as good a claim to their contents as yourself. However, I cannot but confess that both your offers are most fair and liberal, but as, previously to taking service under a new master, it is requisite that I obtain the concurrence of my

present one, I will e'en to the prince; and if on my laying before him the conditions on which the exchange is proposed, he consent to it, I promise you that you will not find me a reluctant party to the contract. In the meantime, my lord duke, and you mine ancient friend, I wish you a good morning, and an appetite for the very wholesome breakfast I have had the honour to serve up to you."

Thus speaking, the valiant captain quitted the prison, leaving the duke and the ex-cashier to discuss with what appetite they might, a somewhat homely breakfast, washed down by a flagon of liquor, which deserved, in its fullest sense, the encomium usually pronounced on good wine, namely, that there was not a head-ache in a hogshead of it.

"Truly, my brother in affliction," said the duke, when the gaoler was fairly out of ear-shot, "I think we stand as good a chance of being hanged, as any two in Germany."

"For Heaven's sake," rejoined Dandowich, "don't talk in that horrible strain, my lord duke. The prince," he added, speaking against his own conviction, "will surely not proceed to that extremity. What have we done?"

"Nothing to the purpose, unfortunately," was the reply, "or we should not be now laid by the heels in this fashion."

"Why does not your grace appeal to the emperor?" inquired Dandowich.

"Because," was the answer, "there happen to be some six feet of solid masonry, and fifty leagues of indifferent road between me and the imperial ear."

"But," responded the other, "the prince dares

not refuse to forward any memorial your highness may think proper to address to the emperor."

"Perhaps not," said the duke, "but as I know that his imperial majesty will decide after the manner of German emperors, namely, for the stronger party, I see little use in troubling him in the matter. No, friend Dandowich, it is all up with us. I have played a game as desperate as my fortunes, and perhaps have no right to complain of the prince adopting measures against myself, which I should certainly pursue against him could we at this moment exchange positions."

"That mad enthusiast," exclaimed Dandowich, "spoiled all."

"Nay," said the duke, "I blame not him so much as that blind dotard, the dean, who selected him for such a mission. Our only chance of deliverance was in the connivance of the old captain of the household guards," he continued, after a pause.

"And he it seems," remarked Dandowich, "is incorruptible."

"Because we had nothing but promises to bribe him with," said the duke; "but no matter," he added, "if we have taken nothing by the experiment, we have as certainly lost nothing, since our situation cannot be worse than it is."

Leaving these two worthies to console each other as they best may, we must now revisit the chamber of the enthusiast, whose condition had changed materially for the worse within a few hours after the last interview with the margravine, which we have described. The excitement produced by the discoveries made by that princess, appeared to have accelerated a catastrophe which

it was, from the first, foreseen could not finally be averted, and when she was next summoned to his bed-side, she found him scarcely conscious of her presence.

The margravine, who was not prepared for so sudden a change, was overwhelmed with the bitterest sorrow. When the first paroxysm of her feelings had passed, she despatched an attendant to summon Helen to take a farewell of one, who, notwithstanding all the wildness and eccentricity of his character, had created an interest in her bosom, which she had never felt for any other human being.

For some minutes they remained watching every change in the countenance of the loved being before them, and looking anxiously for some symptom of returning consciousness. Some time, however, elapsed before his eyes, which had been closed for nearly an hour, opened, when he stared vacantly about him; but at last, perceiving Helen, he fixed his gaze upon her for a few seconds, and then said feebly, and slowly, but distinctly:

"Helen, this is kind! I had not thought to have looked upon that face of loveliness again, but I thank Heaven that I am enabled to gaze upon it with the feelings which become my condition. Forgive me for the presumptuous, and, I fear, sinful visions in which I once indulged. I was not worthy of your love, and Heaven has interposed the shadows of the tomb between us. I have been awakened from a long and delusive dream, and been enabled to look back upon my wild career, and to see myself as I really was. May the brief space which has been left me for repentance, not have

been given to me in vain. Alas! I have mixed up the things of Heaven with the passions of earth, and have injured the holy cause to which I vowed to devote myself, and which I madly deemed, in my misdirected zeal, I was promoting. Helen, again I thank you—forgive—but remember me!"

A brief space succeeded these exclamations, when, raising his languid eyes to the margravine, he looked earnestly in her face, and added, in a scarcely articulate voice, "Farewell! — bless — bless you!"

Another pause ensued, after which a sudden lighting up of his features was perceptible,—but it was the last flash of the expiring taper of life, for with the words, "My mother, I come — I come to thee," his last breath passed away, and his spirit sped to its account.

The grief of the margravine and her young attendant will be more easily conceived than described; it was not a grief that wasted itself in words, but was of that absorbing and enduring character which defies the lapse of time, and the power of earthly consolation.

The last tribute of the living to the dead was paid to the remains of Isidor, with a pomp and form becoming a member of the illustrious house of which he was a descendant,— and he, who had been in life a wanderer, without a home and without friends, reposed in death by the side of statesmen and warriors.

CHAPTER XII.

It was on the third day after the margrave had been pronounced by his medical attendant sufficiently well to venture from his chamber, that he directed the whole of the household of the margravine and his own attendants to assemble in the great hall of the building. On the doors being thrown open to admit them, he was discovered sitting in a chair of state, with the margravine, his mother, on one hand, while on the other was a vacant chair. The effects of disease were still frightfully apparent in his wan features and wasted form, but he was calm, collected, and dignified.

He looked around him among the crowd which formed the court, as if searching for some one, and at last inquired, "Where is Margaret Eberstein?"

"Nay, my son," exclaimed the margravine, with a look in which entreaty and apprehension were strangely blended, "after what has happened—after the active part she has taken in the conspiracy against your life, surely you will not expose your-

self to the shock and excitement of a public interview with her."

"Mother," said the prince, calmly but firmly, "I may not be hindered in this matter. Let the lady Margaret Eberstein be informed that I wait her presence," he added, addressing himself to the attendants.

"At least," rejoined the margravine, taking another ground, in her anxiety to prevent an interview from which she could augur none other than evil consequences, "at least consider her feelings, if you have no regard for your own, my son. You would not, surely, under the peculiar circumstances, expose her to the gaze of an assemblage like the present."

"Madam," was the margrave's reply, "I will be obeyed." Then, turning to one of his officers, he added, "I pray you, sir, if your prince have any claim on your duty or your love, pleasure me in this matter, and summon the young lady to our presence."

The margravine had miscalculated her power over her son, or had chosen a wrong moment for its exercise. She perceived it, and, at whatever expense of feeling, was silent.

"Where is the duke, our uncle?" was the next inquiry of the margrave.

"A prisoner in the eastern turret," was the reply of the redoubtable captain of the margravine's household troop.

"Conduct him hither," rejoined the prince.

In a few minutes, Margaret Eberstein was introduced, attired in the deepest mourning, with her head bowed upon her chest, and having a thick

veil cast over her head, which left no part of her features visible. She was led to the foot of the platform on which the chairs of the prince and the margravine were placed. Margaret uttered not a word, but, folding her arms, appeared to await, with the resignation of despair, the will of the margrave.

Shortly afterwards, a door at the further end of the hall was opened, admitting the duke, who was followed and preceded by a guard of soldiers.

His air was that of a man who had played a desperate game for a great prize, and, having been unsuccessful, was sullenly waiting to pay the stake which he had ventured on "the hazard of the die," and stood with his eyes fixed doggedly upon the ground.

A pause of some moments succeeded, during which a struggle appeared to be passing in the breast of the prince; a bright flush was on his brow, and a slight quiver played about his lips, ere he could give utterance to the words which were trembling on his tongue.

At last he said, "My friends, it is by Heaven's mercy that I am permitted to address you again. I have been 'down to the gates of the grave,' and have returned a wiser, if not a better man. It is on the verge of the tomb that the most headlong in the race of profligacy and crime turns back to survey his career. I have stood upon that fearful precipice—I have taken that appalling retrospect of my course—and have been graciously vouchsafed an opportunity of amending it. I am, as it were, risen from the dead; but, instead of awaking in the regions of despair, I find myself in the land of

the living, and therefore in the land of hope! The resolutions formed upon the bed of sickness—nay, to all appearance, as well as to my own conviction, the bed of death—I devote the first moment of returning health to fulfil.

"Standing," he continued, after a brief space, in which he appeared to recover his breath, "so much in need of mercy from my God, my first act shall be one of mercy to man. My uncle—for I cannot forget that my revered sire called you brother—my uncle, in whatever degree or manner I may have offended others, to you, at least, I have never been wanting in duty and affection. With my purse I recruited your exhausted exchequer—with the flower of my army have I succoured you, in circumstances under which, but for my timely aid, your enemies would have crushed you. And how have you repaid me? By attempting to tear the coronet from my brow, and to plant a dagger in my heart. By every law of nations and society your life is forfeit to outraged justice—it is mine—and, being mine, thus I restore it to you. Guards, release the duke! and see," added the prince, turning to an officer, "that he have safe-conduct to his own dominions."

"Prince," was the duke's reply, "your arms conquered, but your magnanimity has humbled me, and bound me to you for ever. I owe you my life, and, when I forget the debt, may Heaven forget me!"

Having spoken these words he bowed to the margrave, and quitted the hall.

The prince, somewhat exhausted by the effort he had made, was for a few moments silent; but it was

evident to those around that he was endeavouring to nerve himself for another trial. At length he spoke:

"Our first act was one of mercy—be our next an act of justice! Margaret Eberstein——"

At this moment the margravine, who trembled for those schemes of ambition which she had built upon the alliance she so much desired for her son, could not restrain herself from making one last effort to avert the consequences she dreaded. Regardless, therefore, of the state which she, on ordinary occasions, so rigidly preserved, she flung herself at the feet of the prince, and, forgetting her own dignity, implored him to be jealous of his. She again called to his mind, and painted, in exaggerated colours, Margaret's participation in the conspiracy against his life and his sovereignty; a crime which she repeatedly and energetically urged as countervailing any injury which she might have sustained at his hands.

In fact, exclusively of her own favourite views for the aggrandizement and enriching of her son by a splendid marriage, the margravine revolted from his alliance with one whose fair fame had been sullied, notwithstanding that the prince himself had been the author of her disgrace.

The prince, however, although he listened patiently and respectfully to the remonstrances of his mother, appeared to have worked himself into a frame of mind which placed him utterly beyond their influence. When the margravine had concluded, he turned again towards Margaret Eberstein, and said:

"Margaret, I acknowledge before this assembly,

and with deep and bitter remorse, that I have done you grievous wrong; deceived by a false marriage, you were betrayed into an act of which, although the shame has unjustly fallen upon you, the sin was wholly mine. Conscience, however, which slept under your merited reproaches, has been roused by the horrors of the yawning tomb. Margaret! if you can again take to your bosom the man whom you once loved as only woman loves, he is ready to make the only reparation which is left in his power, and place you in that station which your virtues merit, and which you had once reason to think was your own."

Margaret made no articulate reply, but, with a loud and convulsive sob, threw herself at the feet of the margrave, and remained in that position until the ebullitions of her feeling had in some sort subsided; when she raised her streaming eyes towards the throne, and exclaimed:

"Forgive you, my prince! would that I could forgive myself for my participation in a conspiracy which embraced among its objects an attempt upon your life. But Heaven is my witness that I knew not of the design. Goaded by your neglect, I sought my revenge in the humiliation of the author of my sufferings; but, believe me, I would not have harmed a hair of your head; and I appeal to those who have now—thanks to your highness's clemency, no motive for concealing the truth,—if the inviolable sacredness of your person was not one condition on which alone I consented to aid in the conspiracy against your power."

"Margaret," was the prince's rejoinder, "I need no proof of your innocence of any design

upon my life, which, indeed, had been but a just forfeit of my ingratitude and treachery. In proof of my confidence I am now ready, at this moment, and in this presence to ratify the promise which I have made to you. Let our chaplain," he continued, addressing himself to one of his retinue, "be summoned on the instant."

"It will not need your highness," was the exclamation of one, who, stepping forward from among a group of domestics by which he had been hitherto screened from observation, exhibited to the somewhat abashed margrave the individual, long since discarded from his service, who had been employed to obtain the office of a counterfeit priest, in order to the mockery of a union between the prince and Margaret Eberstein.

After the first emotions of surprise had subsided in the heart of the margrave, he addressed this new performer in the drama, the plot of which was thus thickening, and said, with some sternness of manner:

"Ready tool as you were of an evil master, methinks your presence, at this juncture, might have been spared. Yet, wherefore," he added, changing his stern tone for one of deep melancholy, "wherefore should I murmur? It is but a part of the humiliation, which may Heaven accept as a penance for my deep guilt in this matter! I pray you, however," continued the prince, "explain to us what mean you by these words."

"I mean," replied the man, deliberately, yet respectfully, "what I say;—there is no need of a priest to right the lady's wrongs, if wrongs she have sustained, of which I wot not."

"Dost come here to puzzle us with riddles?" inquired the prince somewhat sharply.

"I deal not in riddles, your highness, but in facts," said the other. "A plain tale is soon told; yon lady is as truly your bride as was the margravine by your side that of your gallant sire. Your highness may remember the nature of a commission entrusted to me on one occasion, to which it is not necessary more particularly to allude. The father of that lady," continued the man, pointing to Margaret Eberstein, "was my best friend, at a time when friends were scarce enough, and I had no desire that the daughter of my benefactor should become the paramour even of a prince. I, therefore, on that occasion, instead of a false priest, procured a true one—a man, who if honesty were among the cardinal virtues, should have had a red hat between his shaven crown and the storm of adversity which has descended pitilessly upon it."

"Produce him," exclaimed the prince with great eagerness; "and I will make you rich as your heart can desire."

"Nay," was the reply of the somewhat unceremonious and independent personage then addressed, "I have enough to serve my turn for the short remainder of a pretty long lease of life; but if your highness will promise my friend the priest a nook by the hall fire, a meal and a night's lodging, when those comforts shall be scarce with him elsewhere, I will introduce him to this noble presence with as little delay as may be."

"Nay," said the prince, "if he be all that you describe him, I will e'en promise him a chapel and a stipend which shall enable him to bestow, in-

'stead of suing for the boon you crave for him; only produce him."

"Anselm come forth, and claim the fulfilment of this princely promise," exclaimed the other, in a somewhat louder tone.

The words had scarcely passed his lips, when a venerable looking man, in the ecclesiastical garb, advanced from the crowd, and presented himself at the foot of the platform.

"Your highness will perceive by those papers," said the priest, presenting certain credentials to the prince, "that my pretensions to the sacerdotal office are well founded; and it may be, that your recollection of my person may identify me with him who was made the happy, though humble instrument of preventing your highness from the commission of a heinous crime."

"Against the actual commission of it, holy father," was the prince's reply; "but the guilt of it is nevertheless upon my soul, since the intention was in my heart. Nevertheless, you have my thanks, and shall soon feel that I can be grateful. In the mean time, let us perfect that which we have begun."

As he spoke, he descended from the platform, and advancing towards Margaret, took her hand, and then conducting her to the vacant chair, seated her beside him, amid the acclamations of the assembly, who had throughout testified the most intense interest in the scene.

The margravine, who, in the first instance, had been thrown off her guard by her eagerness to accomplish her own ambitious views, now perceiving that the evil she dreaded was past redemption, like a

woman of the world, which, in every sense she was, made a virtue of necessity, and with the best grace she could put on, did the agreeable on the occasion, to the no small relief of Margaret and the great delight of the prince.

There remained, however, another individual, who had taken, if not a conspicuous, an active share in the conspiracy against the life and sovereignty of the prince, and who stood guarded by two soldiers in one of the recesses in the hall.

The quick eye of the margrave soon discerned him. "Bring forth the traitor!" was the command, and, reluctantly dragged into the light, Dandowich stood before the prince. The eye of the culprit, though cast to the ground, was restless; and his whole frame exhibited the most violent emotion.

"Dandowich," said the margrave, after surveying the prisoner for a few moments, "the duke, your principal in the late conspiracy, was incited by ambition—a bold vice, at any rate, although it led him to an utter recklessness of the means by which it was to be gratified. De la Montée, who has paid the forfeit of his treachery, was spurred on by his thirst to revenge an indignity, which, however justly passed on him, could not but arouse the spirit of a soldier. But you, who have been nurtured by my family—who, from the condition of a peasant boy have been raised to a situation in the household, beyond which your ambition could never reasonably have soared—could have had no other incentive but the sordid love of gold. Speak! have I not assigned the true motive for the base betrayal of your trust?"

Dandowich bowed his head in acknowledgment

that the prince was correct in his conclusion, but appeared unable to utter a word.

"It is well for you," continued the margrave, "that I have resolved that my enemies shall not be included in my sacrifices to justice on this occasion. You are utterly unworthy of the office you hold, and you are therefore degraded from it; but in sparing your life I will not make that boon a curse by sending you forth pennyless into the world; choose what spot you please for your abode; but if it be in my dominions, let it be as far from my court, and that of the margravine, my mother, as may be. A pension, ample, for not only necessaries, but comforts, shall be settled upon you for your life. Now go," continued the margrave, after a pause,—"thank Heaven for the mercy which has been extended to you, and let me see your face no more."

Dandowich, who was an utter craven, no sooner heard the mild sentence which had rescued him from a doom which he felt he had deserved, and which he had no right to hope would be averted, flung himself at the foot of the margrave, and in the most impassioned manner expressed his joy and gratitude.

The prince, somewhat disgusted by the abject clinging to existence which the cowardly culprit displayed, repeated his commands for the other's immediate departure from his presence in a stern tone; when Dandowich, slowly rising from his humiliating posture, turned and quitted the hall. It must, however, be recorded, to the credit of either his gratitude for his deliverance, or his penitence, that Dandowich left behind him a manifesto

or confession, in which he stated that he had contrived, by the most artful representation, to convince the prince, that Isidor was actually the son of the margravine. The crafty page was induced to this artifice, in order to strengthen his influence over the prince, who, he well knew, would be anxious to propitiate, and careful of offending the depositary of a secret which so materially involved the reputation of the margravine. Dandowich also confirmed, by his confession, Margaret's assertion, that the personal safety of the prince had been stipulated for by her when she joined in the plot of the duke.

The confession of our faults is one of the most severe trials of magnanimity to which we can be subjected. We can forgive our enemies, and in so doing detract not from our dignity, but to acknowledge ourselves in error before an assembly of our inferiors, "Hic labor, hoc opus est;" and as the effort is difficult, in proportion to the height from which we descend, instances of such a sacrifice of self-love are rare among the princes of the earth. In the estimation of most persons, the character in which we have just exhibited the margrave, will appear a sufficiently humiliating one. Whether the penance were self-imposed, or enjoined by his confessor, it is not in our power to determine; probability would favour either hypothesis, although from the pleasure which history informs us the priests of the Roman church have occasionally taken in the humiliation of their temporal sovereigns, I should incline to the latter supposition. In either case, the prince exhibited no ordinary power of self-control.

The merits of our old acquaintance, the captain of the household guard, were not overlooked by the margrave, who took an opportunity of showing his sense of the veteran's services in a manner most agreeable to his feelings, namely, by adding a handsome pension to his pay.

At the period at which we now drop the curtain upon our drama, Helen retained her post of maid of honour to the margravine, in whose esteem and confidence she had acquired a distinguished place. Her beauty and accomplishments procured her many admirers; but the cherished memory of the singular being to whom alone she had ever given her heart, was fatal to the suit of the many aspirants for her hand.

Isaura, who, as has already been stated, was cured of her love for the margrave, by the discovery of his attachment to Margaret, was, of course, released from durance, and having no inducement to remain at the court of the margravine, returned to her native country.

The margrave, when restored to his wonted health, did not forget the lesson which he had learned upon the bed of sickness; but was distinguished not less by the mildness of his sway over his subjects, than by his exemplary conduct in domestic life.

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